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SILVER STAR

HMS Dauntless bears down on Portsmouth as the second of Britain's Type 45 destroyers makes her inaugural entry to Portsmouth Harbour - see page 5. Picture: LA(Phot) Keith Morgan



Fleet Focus

WELCOME to the Tens (or is it the Ones?). Anyway, the weak winter sun rises on the new decade with the focus rather as it was as the millennium began: the Gulf.

With an agreement once more reached between London and Baghdad, RN operations have resumed in earnest in the Gulf.

It was the waters of Kuwait, not Iraq, which saw the most concerted effort by British vessels.

The Black Duke – **HMS Monmouth** – led RN/RFA participation in 'Thank-you Kuwait', a display of military force in gratitude for the support the Gulf state has given the Allied nations for the past two decades. The frigate was joined by **Atherstone**, **Chiddington** and **RFA Lyme Bay** (see pages 24-25).

Not content with that, the 'Crazy A' has been hard at work with the Americans on a mine-warfare exercise (see page 9).

One thousand miles to the south, **HMS Lancaster** has taken up station on counter-piracy patrol (see page 5).

As befits the last month of the year, a host of ships returned home: **HMS Quorn** finished blowing up mines on both sides of the Atlantic and sailed back into Portsmouth (see page 5), as did **HMS Kent** which spent six months in the Gulf (see page 4).

Type 22s **Cumberland** (see page 4) and **Cornwall** (see right) have both ended their stints east of Suez and returned to Devonport, the Mighty Sausage in wind and rain, the Fighting 99 in the fog.

And **HMS Iron Duke**'s record-breaking tour-of-duty in the Caribbean (featuring that drugs bust) is also done. Busy to the very end, the frigate protected the Queen, then helped to save the life of a stricken mariner (see page 6).

Mine clearance divers past and present gathered aboard HMS Belfast in London to celebrate the achievements of John Ouvry, the first man to defuse a German magnetic mine 70 years ago (see page 13).

Seven decades later, his legacy is maintained by a small band of brothers; we focus on the exploits of the **Northern Diving Group** (see pages 10-11).

The NDG team can often be found working alongside Faslane's Sandown-class mine countermeasures vessels, among them **HMS Penzance** (see page 22).

There's been a string of awards for naval aviators: **854 NAS**, **Naval Strike Wing** and **MASU** for Afghanistan (see pages 6 and 8), **815 NAS** for its work with **HMS Portland** (see page 8).

Back to dry land and the **School of Flight Deck Operations** at RNAS Culdrose whose work comes under the spotlight (see pages 16-18).

The school already has one eye on revamping the dummy deck to accommodate the (massive) flight decks of **HM Ships Queen Elizabeth** and **Prince of Wales**. A lot of studies into the future vessels' flight operations are also under way on Portsdown Hill (see page 23).

Talking of shiny new playthings, there are now two Sputniks (or spinning eggs if you prefer) in Portsmouth courtesy of the inaugural arrival of **HMS Dauntless** with her distinctive main mast silhouette (see page 5).

And then there's Dauntless' nemesis, **HMS Astute**, which is now settling in at Faslane. We take a look at life aboard the £1bn boat (see pages 20-21).

As Astute entered stage left, **HMS Trafalgar** took her curtain call; the veteran boat was formally decommissioned in Devonport (see opposite).

And finally... Hats off to the men and women of **HMS Gannet** who, thanks to the British weather and an invention known as the mobile phone, smashed through the 400-rescue barrier in 2009 – a feat unsurpassed by any UK Search and Rescue unit (see page 4).

Exorcising the ghosts

THIS spectral apparition emerging from the Devonian mist is **HMS Cornwall**, home after seven months on counter-piracy patrol.

The Type 22 deployed east of Suez in the spring for the first time since the notorious incident when her boarding party was seized by Iranians in the northern Gulf.

This time her focus was on pirates in the waters off East Africa, and her Commanding Officer, Cdr Johnny Ley, is delighted with her showing.

"The deployment went bloody well, but it was damned hard work," said Cdr Ley.

"The boys and girls have risen to the challenge, every one of the 226 days we have been away."

One objective was to move on from the shadow of the boarding party incident in the Northern Gulf two and a half years ago.

"I think for the sailors it wasn't an issue. For some senior rates, officers and myself it was there," said Cdr Ley.

"We would be naive to think if there had been an incident it wouldn't have been blown up by the media because it's Cornwall."

"East of Suez it was 'HMS Cornwall – there's baggage and recent history', so everything we did was with that in mind.

"Now we have been there and done that, all those ties have been cut and the ship can move forward."

"When we popped out into the Mediterranean it's like we had exorcised

any ghosts that may or may not have been lingering."

But the deployment was not about restoring a ship's pride and reputation – there was serious work to be done.

"One beacon that stands out is the fact that we didn't miss one day on task," said Cdr Ley.

"For an old ship that is very good. We were able to provide services to the embarked NATO staff every single day whilst all around us there were newer ships from all nations going off task with various problems."

"We were there and we stuck at it. It's demonstrable of the fighting spirit we have worked quite hard to foster."

That work was done in an international context – not just the NATO group SNMG2, of which Cornwall acted as flagship for group commander Cdr Steve Chick, but alongside many other nations who are patrolling these dangerous waters.

"We have probably dealt with 20 different nations in our time out here," said Cdr Ley.

"It has done a huge amount for international maritime co-operation – much more than any passex or port visit would do."

"We have had regular exchanges of information with the Chinese, Russians and so on in counter-piracy, breaking new ground."

Among the nations present is Iran, and Cornwall found herself in Salalah at the same time as Iranian Navy forces which

were also carrying out maritime security patrols – not a problem for the British ship, which followed the normal courtesies and radio contacts with their Iranian counterparts.

The effectiveness of the international anti-piracy effort in the area can be inferred from the fact that not a single merchant vessel was taken by pirates in the Gulf of Aden over the four-month period the frigate was on station there – the corresponding period in 2008 saw 16 ships hijacked in the same area.

As the ship headed back through the Mediterranean on her way home, the various departments tackled outstanding paperwork and reports, totting up figures along the way.

The Type 22 frigate, away for 226 days (nearly eight months in old money), spent 80 per cent of her time on deployment at sea, steaming more than 43,000 nautical miles at an average of 240 miles on each of those days.

She refuelled at sea more than 20 times, flew over 150 helicopter sorties (a total of 214 hours airborne, which adds up to almost nine days), fired almost 250 4.5in rounds and 28,000 7.62mm rounds.

At one stage the ship spent 30 consecutive days at sea – the reward for that was a brief stand-down in the Seychelles.

Cdr Chick left the ship at Crete, flying to Naples for a briefing – he will return east of Suez with HMS Chatham this year.

Picture: LA(Phot) Martin Clunie, FRPU West





● Trafalgar's crew man her casing as they bring the boat into Devonport for the final time

'You are marvellous - and I will miss you...'

"IT'S important that we remember a decommissioning ship, that their passing is marked after a long and proud life."

Cdr Charlie Shepherd, the Commanding Officer of HMS Trafalgar, has a good point.

We trumpet the arrival of state-of-the-art this, billion pound that. We cheer each ship hurrying down a slipway into the water for the first time.

But the passing of a long-serving ship or submarine, well, that's something rather more low-key.

Let's not mourn the decommissioning of HMS Trafalgar. Let's celebrate the achievements of the boat which gave her name to a class of submarines.

Let's celebrate the deeds of a boat which has served her nation for 26 years.

Let's remember how she dealt a blow against the Taliban, striking their strongholds in Afghanistan with her Tomahawk missiles.

Let's remember a warship going out not with a whimper but with a (simulated) bang. Active till the very end, just a few weeks ago she could be found hunting Type 23s off Scotland, teaching a new breed of potential submarine drivers the art of command. The green flares in the Inner Seas were proof that Trafalgar got her quarry.

But above all, let's remember the hundreds of men who have done business beneath great waters in a warship whose name resonates throughout naval history.

The first of Britain's Trafalgar-

class boats formally passed into history in Devonport with a decommissioning ceremony which brought her career to an end.

Former crew, previous commanding officers and the person who launched Trafalgar on a summer's day in 1981 – and who has followed the boat's progress avidly ever since – Lady Fieldhouse joined the current ship's company for the farewell service.

The widow of the popular submariner and Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fieldhouse told Trafalgar's ship's company: "You are marvellous and I will miss you."

Throughout Trafalgar's 26 years of service, the boat's patron has been kept fully apprised (as far as possible) of the T-boats deeds.

"Some ships can simply peter out," says XO Lt Cdr Scott Johnson. "We have been busy right to the end."

"We've achieved everything asked of us this year. Everything which you can do operationally we have done this year. You cannot ask more of a boat – particularly one which is 26 years old."

Indeed, while she might show her age externally, internally Trafalgar is in remarkably good nick.

The 'T-boat vultures' have already raided some of the kit for the rest of the hunter-killer fleet (more about that next month).

They can gnaw away at the boat's vitals but, as Cdr Shepherd points out, "Trafalgar's not about the steel tube, the black hull. She's about the people. Their pride, their ability. That's what makes Trafalgar."

Speak to any of the ship's



● Lady Fieldhouse chats with Trafalgar's Guard of Honour during the decommissioning ceremony

company and they'll stress the bond between this band of brothers.

"This is the best set of lads I have worked with," says LCH James Ellison. He transferred from skimmer world to Trafalgar. He's not an out-and-out 'deep', so he can draw comparisons between the two.

"I love it on board. Of course, there's still the rank structure, but it's a lot friendlier. It's like a large family – very hard to explain really."

The leading hand has 130 shipmates (aka "130 food critics") who are already scattering throughout the Silent Service.

Most are sad to leave: in the hunter-killer world, Trafalgar has the reputation as a 'jolly boat': she gets more than her fair share of runs ashore.

Runs ashore in the Silent Service are a comparative thing. Compared with a Type 23 on NATO duties in the Med, Trafalgar fares badly. Compared with a bomber, Trafalgar does quite nicely.

Partly it's down to her design – Trafalgar unlike the rest of the class has a propeller not a propulsor – and partly it's down to her kit (the class do differ in their weapons and sensors outfit).

"There's a romantic notion that we still do the Tom Clancy stuff," says weapons engineer officer Lt Cdr Wayne Stafford. "And we still do. But there's so much more these days: working with task groups far more than we ever did."

"Stealth is our most valuable asset – but it also means that so much of what we do is not



published. There's still an air of mystery about submarines. There's a lot of things we have done which would really interest people."

And there we have to leave it...

"When you go to Drafty, you say you want a 'jolly boat', not a 'sneaky boat', says AB(WS(SM)) James Launce.

He told Drafty that more than six years ago. He's among the longest serving members of the crew.

"Trafalgar has a reputation as a jolly or 'sunshine boat', he adds. "We've been almost everywhere – Singapore, Goa, Rio. We've been very lucky."

'Lucky', too, is a relative thing in the Senior Service. Accommodation aboard the T-boats is spartan (hot-bunking, over 30 guys sleeping in the bomb shop if needs be), storing ship for sea, loading weapons is about brawn, not pressing a button. Heads and shower facilities are rudimentary. But at least there's a NAAFI... or rather the nutty bucket.

There's a fixed rate for bars of chocolate – 50p irrespective of size or quality. "If you get a Yorkie, you dip in, get a Curly Wurly, you dip out..." points out marine engineer officer Lt Cdr Richard Cragg.

The price of Yorkies and Curly Wurlys may have risen a bit since Trafalgar put to sea a quarter of a century ago, much of the kit inside may have changed, the Cold War may have ended, but bring some Trafalgar old boys aboard and they'll find lots still the same (particularly aft).

Mike Tonge joined Trafalgar for the first time in 1988.

Twenty-one years down the line the lieutenant is the boat's

assistant marine engineer officer.

"The kit has changed and because of the age some of the equipment breaks down more frequently. But the ethos of the people, their philosophy has stayed the same. Trafalgar has always been a good boat."

WO2(ME(SM)) Sean Boulton is another Trafalgar stalwart. He helped her recommission a dozen years ago and is serving with her once more as she passes out of service.

He's had every T-boat with the exception of Turbulent. Traf stands out. "She's probably the most enjoyable boat to serve on in the Fleet. Good crew, good jolies. She's the most colourful boat with the most colourful characters."

"But on top of that, we have been asked to do a job – and we have always done it."

"The last thing we did was Perisher which really pushes a boat. We came through that smiling."

Which is a nice way to finish. Don't shed a tear for Trafalgar. "Let's celebrate everything she's achieved," says Cdr Shepherd. "She owes her name to a defining battle in Royal Navy history and it's sad there won't be a Trafalgar in commission."

"She's done her duty right to the end – and she's done it well."

Well? Some of Cdr Shepherd's ship's company are even more emphatic.

"There's a healthy rivalry among the other submarines," says Lt Cdr Cragg. "The fact is we're on Trafalgar and we're a better boat than any of the others."

So that's the gauntlet laid down then...

Gannet leap 400 hurdle

THE busiest just got busier.

The Search and Rescue teams of HMS Gannet – already the UK's most in-demand SAR unit – broke the 400 call-out barrier with a month of 2009 still to run.

The Prestwick-based unit was called out on 359 occasions in 2007. A record. That rose to 382 in 2008, with 347 people rescued. Another record.

Scramble number 400 for the Sea King Mk5 was a relatively-routine transfer of a patient from the Isle of Arran to the mainland for treatment.

Scramble number 399 was rather more demanding. A driver had lost control of his Renault and impaled it on a dry stone wall near Wigton in Dumfries and Galloway.

Firefighters had managed to cut the male driver free from the wreckage of the Megane but he needed to be transferred to hospital in Dumfries, 40 miles away, urgently.

Enter the Gannet boys. They covered the 50-ish miles from their base to the crash site in a mere 18 minutes (a good tail wind helped propel the Sea King along at 180mph; the helicopter's top speed normally is about 140mph).

"There's always a little bit of an unknown when we embark a seriously-injured person, but we always have fully-trained first aiders or paramedics aboard to minimise the risks associated with injuries," said flight commander Lt Cdr 'Florry' Ford.

In this instance, it was PO Taff Ashman, an ambulance-service-trained paramedic who looked after the driver on the 20-minute flight to Dumfries hospital.

"That's where a helicopter comes into its own and can make a real difference," Lt Cdr Ford added.

Gannet's most high-profile recent activity came as a result of the torrential rain which drenched western Scotland and North-West England in November.

While the media focus was very much on the flooding in Cumbria where RAF SAR crews performed with aplomb – and saved lives – Gannet's on-call Sea King was heavily in demand as Nature's wrath wrought devastation.

A pensioner became trapped in her car at Coldstream in the Scottish Borders when a deluge flooded a junction.

Fire and police rescuers were unable to get through the waters.

When Gannet's Sea King arrived at the scene, its crew found the 76-year-old woman clinging to a barbed wire fence thigh-deep in water.

PO Marcus 'Wiggy' Wigfull was winched down, while the pilots battled to maintain a stable position in 45 knots of wind.

"For me it was actually quite a straightforward rescue," explained Wiggy.

"It was the crew on the helicopter who had a tougher job, as the wind was very strong. We were in a hover only 20 feet or so from power lines and it was extremely dark."

The motorist was lifted to safety and taken to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

That rescue was fourth and last of the night which saw the helicopter pulled across northern England and Scotland.

First up was a call to Keswick to help a man trapped in his car; he was rescued before the Sea King arrived.

Next came a search for a man feared to have been swept away by a river near Falkirk.

The Sea King crew spent around 90 minutes looking for the man. The helicopter was never more than 50 metres from power lines and buffeted by strong winds as the crew used night vision goggles attempting to maintain several prolonged hovers above the raging river.

Low on fuel, the Gannet fliers were forced to break off the search and refuel in Edinburgh; it later transpired the call-out had been a hoax.

Not a hoax, however, was scramble number three: a genuine missing person near Perth. He was found by emergency services on the ground while the Sea King was scouring the area.

"It really was a busy night in arduous conditions with heavy rain and gale to severe gale force winds," said pilot and aircraft commander Lt George 'Logie' Baird.

"But we did a good job and by the time we got back to base I definitely felt I had earned my cooked breakfast."



Flying the flag

BY FOLLOWING in the stiff December breeze, a White Ensign flies from the railings at Devil's Point as loved ones welcome HMS Cumberland home.

For more than six months the Type 22 frigate conducted anti-piracy and counter-narcotics patrols east of Suez.

The latter saw £43m of cannabis taken off the 'Hashish Highway' back in July. That was perhaps the most high-profile moment of the deployment, which began back on May 24, but it was not the only success.

On two occasions the frigate drove off pirate attacks: one group attacked a French tuna boat, which led to the Mighty Sausage destroying the brigands' mother ship; in the second incident, the Britons ensured a Yemeni vessel wasn't threatened.

"The deployment was successful, our very presence was an effective deterrent to the illegal activity at sea." They could be the words of Cumberland's CO – but they're actually from the mouth of Chef Daniel Ealey, eager to trumpet the achievements of the Type 22 and his shipmates.

The 34-year-old found his partner Iona Bimead and their children Liana, three, and 12-month-old Alexander waiting.

"It's wonderful to have Daniel home – he has missed half of Alex's life," said Iona. "Liana was also devastated when her daddy went away because she didn't understand why he'd left for what she thought was forever."

"I had good contact while Daniel was away and they were sometimes very quiet in the monsoon period and not much going on with pirates, but there was plenty of excitement for them in the end."

She was one of more than 600 friends and family who had gathered in Devonport to welcome Cumberland home on an icy, windy, and sometimes showery December day.

They were entertained by the Band of HM Royal Marines until Cumberland hove into view and the cheers and shouts of loved ones drowned out the music.

"It was a successful deployment with some excitement with the drugs bust and chasing and catching pirates," said CPO Lee Beardmore, who was greeted by his wife Yvonne and sons Harry, Edward and David.

Yvonne added: "I have had e-mails every day from Lee, but it is obviously amazing to have him back. He's been away twice on



deployments in 18 months. But this makes Christmas extra special, especially so for the boys."

Cumberland clocked up more than 40,000 miles while away, visited three continents and was battered by the monsoons.

She – and her ship's company – had come through all with flying colours, said her Commanding Officer Capt David Dutton.

"I must pay full credit to my ship's company for a job well done. They have been thoroughly professional and a tribute to the Royal Navy," he added.

"It is fantastic to see our families and friends on the jetty in such huge numbers, there are about 650 on the jetty – it was a wonderful sight when we came alongside the jetty. There was a distinct buzz around the ship after Gibraltar when we were on the final stretch home. The Plymouth welcome lived up to that anticipation."

It was a rather less-than-pleasant day (as the photograph above shows) in Portsmouth as HMS Kent returned home from six months away. Certainly it was far colder and damper than the Type 23's theatre

of duty for the second half of 2009: the northern Arabian Gulf.

With most eyes fixed on Afghanistan it's easy to forget the substantial RN/RFA presence in the Gulf, the Senior Service's crucible of operations for most of the past decade.

Kent originally headed east of Suez for the latest roulement of battleship grey supporting Operation Telic, taking over from her fellow Portsmouth-based sister HMS Richmond.

Delays to the signing of an agreement between London and Baghdad meant that the original mission – safeguarding Iraq's oil platforms and working with the Iraqi navy – became a far more general mission of working with Gulf region navies.

And the passage out to and back from the Gulf saw the ship supporting the international anti-piracy mission in the troubled waters between Yemen and Somalia.

It's the second demanding deployment east of Suez in the past 18 months for Kent. CO Cdr Simon Hopper said yet again his men and women had risen to the challenge.

"I am honoured to have commanded such a capable team

and to bring them safely back home to their friends and families.

"They have shown resourcefulness and flexibility in dealing with everything from daily patrols to a search and rescue operation that undoubtedly saved a man's life."

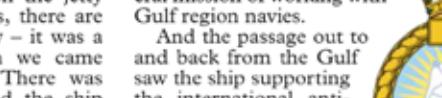
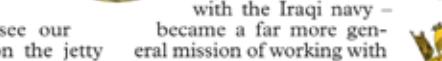
Normal working with Iraq has now resumed as evidenced by HMS Monmouth currently patrolling the ABOT and KAAOT platforms which are responsible for so much of the country's income.

As Kent arrived in the Solent, so HMS York – Britain's fastest destroyer, be it Type 42 or 45 – departed, bound for the Falklands.

The Type 42 is taking over from her sister Gloucester in the South Atlantic, calling in at Gibraltar and the Cape Verde Islands on the way down, before a pre-Christmas break in the party capital of South America (aka Rio).

Her ship's company were at sea on December 25 (heading for the Falklands) and on New Year's Day (on patrol around those islands).

She'll remain in the Falklands-South Georgia area until April before beginning the long haul home via the west coast of Africa. At present, visits are planned to Angola, Ghana and Sierra Leone.



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Contacts in context

2010 begins where 2009 began for HMS Lancaster – east of Suez.

Twelve months ago, the Red Rose frigate was safeguarding Iraq's oil platforms.

The curtain rises on the new decade 1,000 miles or so to the south in the Gulf of Aden.

Lancaster has joined the international counter-piracy mission in waters between Yemen and Somalia, although her deployment will also take her eventually into the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Although piracy – or rather stopping it – is the tag which grabs the media headlines, Lancaster's mission is about far more than 'just' choking (not literally) the brigands.

As sister ship HMS Portland discovered on her 2008-09 patrol to these same waters, far more of the time is spent attempting to stop general illegal activities: people/drugs trafficking (the latter is linked with insurgent activity in Afghanistan), and the terrorist arms trade.

Lancaster has a remit to board vessels suspected of breaching

international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Portsmouth-based Type 23 has already carried out several boardings of vessels – some 'reassurance visits' to say 'hello' to local fishermen and merchant sailors, lawfully plying their trade in difficult waters. Interspersed with these legitimate sailors are the suspicious ones – 'contacts of interest'.

When not carrying out boardings for real, the ship's mixed Royal Marines/Royal Navy boarding party has been practising them (as pictured here by LA(Phot) Tel Boughton of Fleet Regional Photographic Unit East).

Real or *Ersatz* boardings demand the same disciplines and alertness by boarding parties, helicopter crews, bridge and ops room teams, RIB drivers, upper deck sentries and so on.

And they're all played out in the same demanding climatic conditions.

Ship's doctor Surg Lt Jonathan Evans has to constantly remind those exposed to the heat to drink at least one litre of water every hour and wear sun cream.

Before entering the Indian Ocean, Lancaster paid a visit to the Saudi city of Jeddah – the first RN vessel to do so in nearly two years.

The ship hosted a reception for 140 local and international dignitaries, diplomatic officials from the UK, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Republic of Korea, representatives from British industry and Saudi military officers.

Lancaster will remain deployed until May – which for most of her ship's company has meant the second consecutive Christmas/New Year away from home.

Six hours out of Jeddah, the ship met up with HMS Cumberland on her way home (see opposite) after a six-month security mission.

The Type 22 swapped equipment and experiences with Lancaster before the latter continued east and the former sailed west.



Bang go the Noughties

THE year should end with a bang, don't you think?

The men of HMS Quorn certainly do. So they did. A big one.

The Hunt-class ship is in the throes of a five-month NATO deployment which has seen her working on both sides of the Atlantic.

Quorn spent September and October working off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA, including visiting New York for 9/11 ceremonies.

She returned to European waters in November, conducting a near-3,000-mile passage to avoid Atlantic storms, since when she's focused her attention on real, rather than practice, mines in the Kattegat.

The waters between Denmark and Sweden were either sown with minefields or peppered with discarded ordnance by aircraft returning from bombing raids between 1939 and 1945.

DANEX 09 (DANish EXercise 09) was the latest effort to deal with the detritus of conflict – but the Danish organisers of the war games also threw in a little extra 'fun': a little gunnery against remote-controlled targets and damage control.

The exercise ended with the demise of a 700kg WW2 Mk25 mine, blown up by the Quorn team (pictured above in case you were wondering...).

"It's been a very successful deployment," said her CO Lt Cdr Tim Neild. "We've showcased the Royal Navy's world-class mine countermeasures capability on both sides of the Atlantic, and the Danish exercise was a fitting way to close out the deployment."

The youngest of Britain's Hunts, Quorn returned to Portsmouth in time for Christmas leave. She'll be out of action for six months as 2010 begins, undergoing a refit.

RFA Ark Royal?

NORMALLY Ark Royal's being topped up rather than doing the replenishment.

But off Plymouth, the carrier was charged with filling up HMS St Albans as the frigate underwent Operational Sea Training.

RASing (Replenishment At Sea) is fundamental to OST (as it is to any front-line operations) although it's usually conducted with an RFA tanker or one-stop supply ship.

But for a change, the tricky evolution was conducted with Ark.

The Type 23 closed to within 25 metres (82ft) of the carrier, which then swung her crane into action for the transfer of supplies.

On top of the usual difficulties of a RAS, the manoeuvre was made even more challenging courtesy of some very 'seasonal' weather.

Not only did the Saints' RAS team constantly receive a good soaking from the spray from the waves caused by a choppy sea, but the skies were not always blue and the sailors had to contend with a very painful hailstorm.

Despite being cold and wet, the Saints were happy with the outcome – and probably happier with the warm mug of tea they had on their return to their messes.



Dauntless' winning combination

WITH the weak December sun glinting off her hull, the second of Britain's next-generation warships makes her inaugural entry to her home port.

As with her sister Daring, HMS Dauntless sailed into Portsmouth in the depths of winter watched by a sizeable crowd on the historic sea front.

Unlike her sister, there was no mist shrouding the Solent. Just a fair smattering of clouds and a bit of rain.

And also unlike her sister, the second of the RN's six Type 45 destroyers sailed past the Round Tower with the Blue Ensign flying.

But not for long. For the day after the ship berthed for the first

time in Portsmouth Naval Base, the destroyer was formally handed over to the RN by its builders BAE Systems.

So down with the Blue Ensign and up with the White on a day as equally blustery and showery as the one 24 hours before...

As the RN's standard was raised so the ship's company gathered in the (rather large) hangar to hear Deputy Commander-in-Chief Fleet Vice Admiral Richard Ibbotson welcome "a magnificent feat of engineering."

He continued: "HMS Dauntless and her sister ships

are world beaters and the people of the Royal Navy are second to none."

"This is a winning combination, and the ship provides us with the tools to do the job, whatever the country requires of us, for years to come."

As for the ship's company, well they quite like their shiny new plaything.

"It's fantastic that Dauntless has been officially handed over to the Royal Navy and she's now ours," said 19-year-old AB(Sea) Chris Biggs.

"I'm proud to be part of the ship's company and I'm also

really looking forward to going to sea."

His shipmate AB(Sea) Charmaine Harvey added: "It's been a great day and really exciting to welcome Dauntless to the fleet. I'm now looking forward to the future."

The air defence destroyer was launched at BAE's Govan yard in January 2007 (her bow and main mast were built in Portsmouth by VT before the two firms merged) and fitted out on the opposite side of the Clyde at Scotstoun.

She's undergone two series of sea trials. One more batch is planned in the new year before Dauntless is commissioned in the summer.

Picture: LA(Phot) Keith Morgan

Enduring and invigorating – the Liverpool spirit

THE RN's oldest surface ship (we're excluding HM Ships Victory and Caroline) was formally welcomed back into the Fleet with a rededication ceremony in Portsmouth.

HMS Liverpool was out of action for most of 2009 courtesy of a nine-month upgrade in her home port.

Guest of honour at the rededication ceremony was Lady Strathcona, who launched the ship in Birkenhead in 1980 as the wife of the then defence minister Lord Strathcona.

She joined family and friends of the 260 crew members and guests from the ship's namesake city for the event at South Railway Jetty.

The hour-long ceremony was conducted by the Venerable John Green, Chaplain of the Fleet. The principal Royal Navy guest, Commander-In-Chief Fleet Admiral Sir Trevor Soar inspected a guard of 26 members of the ship's company.

Liverpool's CO, Cdr Ollie Hutchinson, said the ceremony was another important milestone in the venerable destroyer's distinguished history.

"It is a tremendous day for the ship and the ship's company and we look forward to sailing again," he told guests.

"I have been fortunate enough to serve in HMS Liverpool three times in my career.

"Each time I return I find the Liverpool spirit enduring and invigorating. She is a remarkable ship and I am proud to command her."

Rounding off the ceremony and in keeping with Royal Navy tradition, the youngest male and female ratings on board cut a rededication cake in front of guests.

The refit, carried out in Portsmouth by BVT Surface Fleet (now BAE Systems Surface Ships), included upgrades to the ship's weapons and sensors and refurbishment of generators and main propulsion engines.

Liverpool is about to embark on several weeks of Operational Sea Training.

Later in the year she's due to serve as the air defence escort for HMS Ark Royal when the carrier leads the RN's flagship deployment of 2010 to the United States.

The return of HMS Ramsey

UNDERGOING a series of rigorous trials right about now is the good ship Ramsey, fresh from an overhaul in Rosyth.

After spending more than two and a half years in the Gulf in support of operations in Iraq, helping to survey the waters, as well as working with the region's navies, the Sandown-class ship returned to Faslane in March.

As sister HMS Bangor emerged from Babcock's hands in Rosyth last summer, Ramsey headed up the Firth of Forth for her refit.

And three months later, out she came.

During her time in Rosyth, shipwrights and engineers fitted Seafox, the successor to the 'yellow submarine' mine disposal system, painters added slicker paint, and revamped the mess decks among other tweaks and overhauls.

The ship underwent sea trials before Christmas and resumes them this month.

● Iron Duke's swimmer of the watch observes as the USS Wasp rendezvous with the Dutch tanker Amsterdam



Heads role for Duke

THE last act of Iron Duke's record-breaking Caribbean deployment saw the frigate in Trinidad – but not for a jolly.

The Type 23 was charged with protecting more than 50 international heads of state: Gordon Brown, Australia's Kevin Rudd, Canada's Stephen Harper, Trinidad and Tobago's George Richards, and a whole host of other leaders who head the family of nations in the Commonwealth. Oh, and the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh were there too.

So not too much pressure on 180 men and women...

A day was spent alongside Chaguaramas in Trinidad first to allow the Iron Ducks to meet their local coastguard counterparts and receive a briefing from Foreign Office representatives.

As with all good military operations, the protection mission had to have a codename (Thaler – an historic German silver coin, if you were wondering) and an acronym (CHOGM – Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting).

For three days while the leaders met in Port of Spain, the ship was in defence watches, sailing from Chaguaramas at action stations, hovering in international waters off the coast of Trinidad, working with other Commonwealth warships and coastguard vessels to track air and maritime traffic and passing contacts of interest to the islands' coastguard.

In gratitude for the sailors' efforts, Foreign Office Minister Baroness Kinnock visited the frigate to hear of the ship's record-breaking drug seizure mission first-hand from the ship's company.

Six officers and men also had the opportunity to meet HRH the Duke of Edinburgh at a reception held ashore in Tobago.

Before arriving in Trinidad, there was still time for the Iron Ducks to squeeze in one final drugs bust.

Patrolling in the eastern Caribbean, the frigate spotted two vessels exchanging cargo – "coopering" as it is termed in the region.

Tracking the smaller, go-fast vessel as it headed towards land using the warship's thermal image camera, Iron Duke despatched

her US Coast Guard team who made another successful drugs interdiction.

This time the drugs were thrown overboard before the US team could seize them, but it was another important success in the continuing fight against narcotics trafficking.

Also on this final counter-narcotics patrol, the Type 23 also met up with the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp and shared a double replenishment at sea with the Dutch tanker HNLMS Amsterdam.

And then it was time to turn for home: a 14-day uneventful 'cruise' across the North Atlantic.

Fate had other plans...

Four days into her passage home, the frigate picked up a mayday.

One of the crew of the motor cruiser Ocean Mercury was seriously ill with severe abdominal pains and the vessel was making very slow progress towards land.

Falmouth Coastguard were unable to find any other vessels in the area able to assist and called on the Iron Ducks...

...who were some 1,100 miles from Ocean Mercury's position.

(Beginning of 1,500-mile dash.)

The frigate made maximum speed for the next 24 hours, then launched her Lynx 'Charger' at the limit of its range with the ship's doctor, Surg Lt Richard Rennie, aboard.

When Charger found the boat, Surg Lt Rennie was lowered on to Ocean Mercury, where he decided the casualty was safe to be winched up – which he was.

Then it was back to Iron Duke briefly, who continued her journey eastwards then launched Charger again at maximum range to take the sailor to hospital in the Cape Verde islands, where he's making a full recovery.

(End of 1,500-mile dash.)

Iron Duke's now home, returning to Portsmouth in time for Christmas. Post festive/deployment leave, and a spot of maintenance, the ship will be back in action on exercises around the UK.



● Towed in the hole... Sailors keep a close watch as Iron Duke's towed array sonar is unravelled for a test run

Picture: LA(Phot) Simmo Simpson, FRPU East



Massive feats by MASU

THE ultimate 'fixers' in the helicopter fraternity have been singled out for their global deeds.

The Mobile Air Support Unit – more commonly known as MASU – have been an ever-present feature in Afghanistan for years in support of British operations (see the 'blob' on our page 2 map...).

The team, based at Fleetlands in Gosport, is responsible for all 'on the spot' repairs to helicopters damaged on operations either by enemy fire or crash landings.

Those repair jobs range from patching up skin struck by small arms fire and coping with airframe fatigue to repairing significant damage caused by rocket attack.

Although MASU is a Royal Navy unit, it's also responsible for in-theatre repair jobs to helicopters in the RAF and Army Air Corps.

And despite the focus being on helicopter operations in Afghanistan, where there is a permanent detachment providing 24/7 cover, the MASU engineers have also flown out to Arizona, Kenya, Columbia and Japan in the past 12 months.

That worldwide commitment has earned the small team a bronze medal from the Royal Aeronautical Society – the professional organisation for the global aerospace community.

"The award was completely unexpected – so we are delighted," said Lt Cdr Andy Dunn, MASU repair manager.

"It reflects the hard work of our helicopter repair teams in Afghanistan and Iraq – and throughout the world – over the last five years."

From Brunei to Brownlow

IFYOU thought 2009 was 'just' about Afghanistan when it came to military operations, allow HMS Bulwark to demonstrate otherwise.

Being 16,000 tons of battleship grey she couldn't get anywhere near Helmand (obviously – Ed).

But by the time the curtain came down on the Noughties, Britain's amphibious flagship had conducted no fewer than ten exercises in 2009.

The year began in cold home waters putting Royals ashore on the beach... and ended in cold home waters putting Royals ashore on the beach.

The beginning was South West Sword, staged in Cornwall.

The last act of 2009 was Lupus (no, we've no idea why they picked a wolf-like codename) working with the Commando Logistic Regiment off Brownlow Beach near Gosport.

In between there was the 'small' matter of leading the Taurus task group featuring (deep breath) Cyprus Wader (in Cyprus), Egemen (Turkey), Red Alligator (Saudi Arabia), Shomodra Torongo (Bangladesh), Bersama Shield (Malay Peninsula), Commando Rajah (Brunei) and Aquatic Taurus (Mediterranean).

By the time Taurus ended in the summer, Bulwark had added 53,000 miles to the odometer.

Post-summer leave, the ship could be found hosting visitors for Navy Days, sending sailors to County Durham for an affiliated visit and taking loved ones to sea for a families day, while her inherent commando unit, 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines, conducted infantry training.

After all that, plus four weeks of maintenance in Devonport, the ship returned to sea for the next round of exercises, CLR Logex (Commando Logistic Regiment logistic exercise) then Lupus.

So that was 2009. And not a sprout in sight... unless her new CO lifted the ban on the Devil's vegetable.

Main effort – but not only effort

FIRST Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope has warned that Britain's future defence strategy should not be driven by the conflict in Afghanistan.

Speaking at Chatham House, the home of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, on the theme of *The Royal Navy: Afghanistan and Beyond*, Admiral Stanhope acknowledged that "the Navy's immediate, unquestionable focus remains its long-standing commitment to supporting the joint campaign in Afghanistan.

"From October [2008] to April [2009], around 3,000 members of the Naval Service provided over 30 per cent of the UK forces deployed to Helmand, including not only the Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade and the Harrier jets of the Naval Strike Wing, but also Naval Air Squadron helicopters and significant numbers of logistic, engineering, medical and HQ staff," he said.

He said that current and future deployments maintained the Navy's support for operations in Afghanistan, but he also cast his eye wider over the elements of the Navy "providing the security needed to cover the UK's back while Defence focuses on Afghanistan."

He listed anti-narcotics patrols in the Caribbean, off West Africa and in the Indian Ocean, maritime security operations in the Mediterranean, the Arabian Sea and off the Horn of Africa, protecting the sea lanes "along which logistic support to the fight in Afghanistan is supplied, and along which this island nation's food, energy and goods are imported and exported."

To that list he added the protection of UK waters and airspace, ports and offshore energy platforms, and the nuclear deterrent for which the Senior



● Watching the sea lanes – HMS Iron Duke, sailing from Nassau in the Bahamas, during her recent patrols in the Caribbean

Service has been responsible for 40 years.

"Given that context, and the imminent Defence Review, my responsibility as a Defence Board member is to argue the case that the MoD's current prioritisation on the fight in Afghanistan should not lead to UK Armed Forces structured predominantly for a relatively narrow spectrum of land-locked, counter-insurgency operations and which lack the ability to conduct high-end war-fighting or indeed any of the vast array of operations in which the country's Armed Forces may be engaged in the future," he said.

"Yet some have tried to argue that this is exactly the route we should be taking in Defence – that all future conflict will involve lengthy stabilisation operations, measured in years, with an emphasis on land forces fighting low-tech enemy insurgents."

The Admiral said that approach ignored the potential for future inter-state conflict – which could either directly affect the UK or perhaps UK interests – and the "declining appetite politically, and within society, for

interventionism."

Admiral Stanhope argued that "resource challenges" should prompt a "focus on values" – there was a need for "a common understanding... of what the UK stands for and how the country's Armed Forces can and will be used to promote those values while also protecting our interests."

"An articulation of our national values can find its expression in foreign and security policy ambitions."

"These should in turn drive the strategy which shapes the Armed Forces' contribution to the defence and security of the nation, at an affordable scale, in the most cost-effective and agile manner."

"This suggests that economic policy should take its place alongside foreign and security policy as a driver of the UK's strategy for Defence."

The First Sea Lord said he welcomed the Defence Secretary's statement in September espousing a policy of Afghanistan First, making it the "main effort for defence".

"However, as I have stated,

Afghanistan is not the only game in town, either now or in the future," said the Admiral.

"As a member of the Defence Board, I am duty-bound to take a longer-term, strategic view of the challenges to the security and defence of our nation."

"I am obliged to think beyond Afghanistan."

He continued: "We have to guard against Afghanistan becoming the template for a future UK Defence structure that can do nothing but

more Afghanistans."

Britain, as an island nation, relied on the free movement of maritime trade and it was also responsible for 14 overseas territories, he reminded his audience.

"A firm believer in the fact that 'prevention of conflict is always better than cure', the Admiral said that a military capability was always necessary to back up diplomatic and economic measures, to deter aggressors and

reassure friends.

And a balanced maritime force provides the cost-effective military muscle a Government might have to call upon, he observed.

"So, while Afghanistan is rightly the Main Effort, it should not be regarded as the Only Effort," said the Admiral.

"The range of threats to UK interests is greater than that."

"In these challenging times, we will need to retain armed forces that are versatile and adaptable, flexible and resilient across the full spectrum of operations, from conflict prevention to high-end war-fighting and back again, at range, from the UK."

"Forces that possess these attributes will best equip Defence for its vital role in supporting Government in the future."

"Such forces can offer real policy choice to the Government in deciding whether and how to engage with others, how to respond to developing threats and crises while minimising entanglement and how best to protect the UK's national interests and promote its values in the wider world, beyond Afghanistan."

Comment – p26

‘Hard workers – not cowards’

FOLLOWING his speech at Chatham House, Admiral Stanhope made a statement on the capture by pirates of Paul and Rachel Chandler from their yacht Lynn Rival.

"This was and is a hostage situation, and for this reason it is not appropriate to discuss the specific details of this case any further," said the Admiral.

"Wave Knight did exactly the right things. She acted professionally and in accordance with her primary purpose, which was to assure the safety of the Chandlers."

"I take real issue with some of the emotional and scurrilous language being used to describe the actions of my sailors."

"The Naval Service is delivering operational

success, all over the world, in everything from high-end war fighting in Afghanistan to search and rescue in Ayrshire."

"Our sailors and marines are working hard, very hard, working well, and are a constant source of pride to me, I hope to you and the nation they serve."

"They do not appreciate, and I do not like them, being branded cowards in certain quarters of the press."

He said he was grateful for the role the media has in raising awareness of what the RN and RM do.

"But it does a disservice to my sailors and marines to suggest, as some in the press have, that they should be doing more, especially where counter piracy is concerned," he concluded.



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Wildcat leaps up

WE'VE already had the maiden voyage of HMS Astute (see pages 20-21).

Now Naval aviators have something to celebrate: the first flight of the next-generation Lynx.

The prototype AW159 – known in Fleet Air Arm circles as the Lynx Wildcat – took to the skies of Somerset with Agusta Westland's chief test pilot, Donald MacLaine, at the controls.

He lifted off from the Yeovil firm's factory and conducted a series of general handling checks during the inaugural flight before bringing the helicopter safely back down to earth.

"This is without doubt a very important milestone. This date was set at contract award in June 2006 and it is to Agusta Westland and the Lynx project team's credit to have delivered it on time," said Stewart Deakin, Wildcat programme manager for Defence Equipment & Support.

The Lynx – and more recently Super Lynx – has provided key aerial support to the RN's frigate and destroyer Fleet for the past three decades.

The successor, known as Future Lynx (or simply 'Flynx') until it was officially renamed earlier this year, takes the best bits of the existing aircraft and adapts them for 21st-Century operations.

Those tweaks include new engines, a hi-tech control panel for the pilot and observer, a nose-mounted infra-red/TV camera with laser designator for targeting, active array radar, defensive aids suite, and a choice of weaponry from machine-guns and depth charges to torpedoes and anti-surface missiles.

Whitehall has ordered 62 Wildcats from Agusta Westland: 34 for the Army Air Corps, 28 for the RN.

There will be little difference between the Army and Fleet Air Arm versions of the helicopter so that they can quickly switch roles if necessary.

The Wildcat is slightly slower than its predecessor (a top speed of 184mph rather than 200mph), but its more powerful engines mean it can carry a heavier load and it has one third again as much range.

The first aircraft will be handed over to the MOD for evaluation in 2011, with the Army version entering service in 2014 and the naval variant the following year.

700W (W for Wildcat) Naval Air Squadron stood up at Yeovilton, home of the RN Lynx force, last May to prepare for the new helicopter's arrival.

Picture: Agusta Westland





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Picture: LA(Phot) Jeremy Lodge, RNAS Culdrose

Airs and aces

FORMED up in their hangar at RNAS Culdrose, members of 854 Naval Air Squadron prepare to receive their operational medals after a ground-breaking tour of duty in Afghanistan.

The Bagger air and ground crews are among a host of aviators honoured for their commitment in Afghan skies – and beyond – this past month.

854 led the inaugural deployment of Sea King Mk7s – the Airborne Surveillance and Control version of the trusty helicopter – to Camp Bastion in the spring.

The Badders – so named because of the distinctive 'sack' containing the Searchwater 2000 radar, key to the ASAC's role – carried out intelligence-gathering missions, particularly outside the 'green zone' which is the focal point of Allied operations in Helmand.

That involved finding and tracking enemy supply routes, providing 'top cover' for Allied re-supply columns and searching for Improvised Explosive Devices – the weapon which has inflicted so many fatalities on British troops in Afghanistan.

The squadron's operations resulted in the detention of enemy combatants, the destruction of weapons and narcotics and recovery of enemy money and equipment.

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope was guest of honour at the ceremony in Culdrose when the campaign medals were presented in front of the friends and family of 854's personnel.

In his address, the admiral said: "What these helicopters can do is see a long way, a very long way, in great detail and then pass that information on, quickly and accurately. Their ability to do that is better-developed than anyone else's, and is the best in the world."

854's mission in Helmand is continued by its sister Bagger squadron, 857.



● Steve Fitz-Gerald, Division President, Cobham Aviation Services, presents the inaugural Cobham Trophy to Harrier pilot Lt Simon Rawlins

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU East

Talking of operations in Afghanistan...

Harrier pilot Lt Simon Rawlins is the first recipient of the Cobham Trophy – named after aviation pioneer Alan Cobham and awarded by the firm he founded.

The award was introduced to celebrate the 100th birthday of Naval aviation and will be presented annually to the fixed-wing naval pilot who has contributed the most to the development or delivery of maritime aviation.

And in the case of the first winner of the Cobham Trophy, a harrier falcon coming in to land mounted on a base of HMS Victory oak, he's contributed a hell of a lot, not merely to the FAA, but also to his country during seven years in the Harrier world.

In five tours of duty in Afghanistan, Lt Simon 'Scran Bag' (yes, it says that in his citation) Rawlins flew 193 operational

sorties in support of Allied ground forces.

To that end, he dropped 20 1,000lb Paveway II, 500lb Paveway IV and 540lb free-fall bombs and emptied six CRV7 rocket pods (each pod contains 19 missiles) at Taliban targets.

He received a commendation for his "decisive, skilful; and life-saving close air support" for Allied troops.

Lt Rawlins was also the qualified weapons instructor introducing the Paveway IV to front-line use in theatre.

And if that wasn't enough, on the ground he was very often the public face of the Naval Strike Wing, hosting VIPs and media and explaining the work of RN fliers in Afghanistan.

"His enthusiasm and sense of humour has also been invaluable, particularly for the younger team, during the various ups and downs of a challenging environment,"



The Wigley Trophy is presented in honour of Capt A N Wigley, Captain of HMS Osprey, who was killed in December 1984 when a Wessex crashed into the breakwater of Portland Harbour.

The trophy which bears his name is awarded to the best flight of a ship passing through FOST, whose experts judge not just the aviation skill of the flight, but also their ability to bond with the rest of the ship's company.

Rear Admiral Snow presented the award to Flight Commander Lt Cdr Joe Dransfield, who accepted the trophy on behalf of his colleagues, before discussing Portland's impending return to FOST with the ship's company.

Once she's completed her second spell of Operational Sea Training in 18 months, the Type 23 is due to head off on a seven-month deployment.

Win your own Sea King

THIS is a model Sea King painted in its original 1969 livery – and it can be yours thanks to those nice folk at Corgi.

The toy and model manufacturer is producing a series of die-cast replicas to celebrate the centenary of Naval aviation.

The range begins with a 1917 Sopwith Camel as flown by WW1 Royal Naval Air Service ace Flt Lt Norman MacGregor.

A generation later, S/Lt Dickie Cork of 808 NAS flew Hawker Hurricanes in the Battle of Britain, downing five German aircraft.

WW2 naval aviation is also represented by a Fairey Swordfish of 838 NAS which served on the merchant aircraft carrier HMS Rapana, and a Corsair Mk2 of 1842 NAS which attacked the Tirpitz in 1944.

The post-war Fleet Air Arm

is celebrated in miniature form by a Westland Wessex HU5 of 845 NAS with HMS Bulwark in 1969.

From the same year, there's the Sea King HAS Mk1 (still flying – you may have seen it out and about during 100th birthday events), and more recently there's a model Sea Harrier FRS1 from 801 NAS during the Falklands War and we're bang up to date with a Lynx MK8 as embarked in HMS Manchester in 2008.

You can find out more about the range at www.corgi.co.uk/shop/the-aviation-archive/fleet-air-arm-100th-anniversary-series/

Or you can have a crack at winning the £47 model by answering this question:



Name: the Royal Naval Air Station near Helston where the 1969 Sea King is based.

Send your answer to Corgi Competition, Navy News.

Leviathan Block, HMS Nelson, PO1 3HH or e-mail corgi@navynews.co.uk

Entries must be received by mid-day on February 10 2010.

A day in the life of Crew 6



● HMS Atherstone conducts diving operations in the Gulf

Picture: LA (Phot) Stuart Hill

HMS AATHERSTONE may have been in the Gulf for the past three years, and Crew 6 may have been working in her since last July, but there is no slacking off in the pace at which the minehunter operates.

Atherstone and her Hunt-class sister HMS Chiddingfold are based at Bahrain, with 46-strong crews cycling through on a six-month rota.

Crew 6 is typical, with seven officers – two under training – nine senior rates and 30 junior rates, headed by their Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Chris Nelson.

So what does the 700-tonne plastic warship and her ship's company do out in the Gulf, far from their home port of Portsmouth?

Let's take midday on a Wednesday as our starting point, right in the middle of a two-week stint at sea which saw RN units alongside American forces on Exercise Shamal.

The usual activities are continuing on board – 46 hungry sailors are being fed from a galley smaller than your average bathroom, one of the 24 loads of washing daily is going through the single machine, and some of the crew are catching up with sleep.

The sailors are at their place of work while on watch – one of seven hours and one of five in every 24 – and everything else (eating, showering, shaving, washing, PT, administration, training and so on) has to be squeezed in off watch.

Being out of sight of land for a fortnight also means being out of sight of a fuel depot, but when you are operating as part of a coalition task force there is the opportunity to top up from a passing tanker.

On this particular Wednesday the tanker in question was Henry J Kaiser-class USNS John Lenthall – five times longer, three times wider and almost 60

times heavier than Atherstone.

By the time the RAS (replenishment at sea) was set up and under way, dusk had fallen and the evolution was completed in the dark – quite an experience as Atherstone sped along just 30 metres from the American Leviathan in a worsening sea state taking on fuel.

Having disengaged, the Hunt-class ship resumed her primary task, using her sonar to survey the sea bed in the search for anything mine-shaped which could present a threat.

That sounds simple, but the process is relatively complex, requiring input from every member of the ship's company.

The area of sea to be searched is divided into sections by the mine warfare team, and lines are then decided, along which the ship drives slowly scanning the sea bed.

The action begins when a contact arouses suspicion amongst the sailors manning the sonar screens, and further investigation is required.

The command team might call on Seafox for a closer look – a vehicle dives down to give the operations room a video link, and if needed another vehicle could be dispatched to deliver a live round, nullifying the threat.

Alternatively, the command team may want the human touch, and one of the ship's highly-trained diving teams may be sent down – as deep as 40m.

While down in the water, they may be asked to destroy the object, recover it for further investigation, or produce diagrams.

On the day in question, Atherstone's diving team carried out a number of crucial safety drills within their decompression chamber, though the Leading Diver – James Roberts – was called away to investigate a contact.

Our 24-hour period also saw the end of a visit by LA(Phot) Stuart Hill, based in HMS Monmouth but temporarily 'loaned' to his old ship to document life

on board a minehunter.

Normally he would have headed back in a sea boat – preferably Monmouth's, which is bigger and faster than Atherstone's.

But the frigate came up with something even better – she sent her Merlin across, and Stuart was winched up to the aircraft as it hovered at mast height above Atherstone's stern as the ship kept a steady course and speed.

Crew 6 had barely returned to their bread-and-butter survey work when the bridge team heard a radio distress call.

Having plotted the relative locations they found they were just 16 miles away, so the Captain was swiftly informed and the information passed on to the team running the coalition exercise.

As more information was gleaned the stricken vessel turned out to be an Iraqi fishing dhow which was flooding fast.

Atherstone, an American frigate and command platform RFA Lyme Bay hurried to the spot and when Atherstone arrived to lend help with her boats a team of Americans had already stemmed the flow and started pumping out the dhow.

The frigate eventually towed the dhow to harbour.

Atherstone recovered her boats and headed back to the exercise; by now it was early afternoon and another lively 24 hours had begun.

Lt Cdr Nelson said: "I am extremely proud of all of the ship's company – MCM2 Crew 6 – currently here in HMS Atherstone.

"Many of them have many jobs, whether it is supporting operations, feeding the team, managing engineering equipment, diving or our core minehunting role.

"It really is extremely satisfying to see them work as a team, and even more rewarding conducting so many different things on a daily basis."

Crew 6 – 'the Super Six' – are due to return to the UK this month to man HMS Ledbury; they will be replaced in the Gulf by MCM2 Crew 8.

■ Gulf round-up – pp24-25



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Take a

THE WATERS of a Scottish loch can be black enough already. The grey light of a November day in the north doesn't filter far beneath the surface.

The divers are clad in their specialist outfits designed for plunging into the even-more comprehensive darkness of submarine casings.

Slimmed down from the customary bulky diving rig, the kit allows the men to undo the access plate on the casing and crawl through the narrow hatch into the constricted space within to carry out essential engineering work.

Lights and cameras are mounted on each side of the headset, a long pipe draws air from the dive-boat on the surface of the water, and each man carries a tongue-in-cheek 'handbag' – an emergency oxygen supply that is never beyond their reach (you swim out "hugging it for dear life", I am told).

The enclosed space diving system (ESDS) isn't unique to these men of the Northern Diving Group – all their compatriots in the Fleet Diving Squadron are trained in the use of this equipment, but here in Scotland it is integral to the daily lives of the men on this team.

"We are the lead team in the Fleet Diving Squadron for underwater engineering and battle damage assessment repair," said Lt Cdr Jason White, commanding officer of the Northern Diving Group (NDG).

"We use it for 90 per cent of its use. We use it all the time because of the work we do here."

"There are simply areas you could not get into in a submarine unless you had that diving kit."

Underwater engineering now has the official title of in-water maintenance and repair, and is a somewhat matter-of-fact term for the constricted limits within which the divers work.

"Clearance divers have always done this sort of stuff. But there's an increased emphasis on it now."

"Support to Clyde Naval Base is our main business," stressed Lt Cdr White.

"But we don't just sit here waiting for a submarine to need repairing."

"We are integral to the base for this engineering, for this security – searching berths, checking jetties. The burden of security here is monstrous – the deterrent is here."

"We have the normal routine military tasks to achieve, alongside bomb disposal."

"We are a bomb disposal team. We are a search and rescue team. But we are Navy divers. We are here in Faslane to do a job for the Navy."

Usually the words diver and bomb disposal appear together significantly earlier in *Navy News* articles, but not in this case.

And it's not to imply that bomb disposal and all the skills, training and knowledge inherent in the whole of the Fleet Diving Squadron are any less among these northern divers – but it's just one aspect of a fleet of tasks that make their demands on the men of the Northern Diving Group.

The repair and maintenance work carried out by divers underwater is a burden across the UK, but the bulk of the submarines are based in Scotland, and the bulk of a submarine is very expensive to hoist out into the dry for specialist engineers to carry out tasks.

The Fleet Diving Squadron is made up of a total of 157 Clearance Divers divided into three Diving Groups, based in the various Naval Bases.

The Southern Diving Group is split between Portsmouth and Plymouth, where their focus is the surface fleet and tends towards the legacy of explosive disposal tasks that litter the Channel.

The Fleet Diving Group works towards a number of specialisations – shallow water, deep water, force protection, and of course, explosive ordnance disposal.

The other specific tasking that sits solely upon the shoulders of the Northern Diving Group is the Nato Submarine Rescue System, the replacement for the rescue submersible LR5 that came to prominence during the loss of the Russian submarine Kursk.

The NSRS, a bulky set-up of unmanned vehicle, submersible, chambers, lifting cranes and containers, that fills an entire building

Nameless Nemo

IT'S most definitely not called Nemo. But if it was, it would only be the small manned rescue submarine (reminiscent of James Cameron's *Abyss*), and not the massive facility that is the Nato Submarine Rescue System (NSRS) in all its glory.

Jointly owned by France, Norway and the UK, the entire Rolls-Royce system is designed to be slung into the back of (multiple) C17, Antonov or other bulk-lift aircraft, flown out and bolted on to a commercial-hire mothership, and the rescue submarine (Nemo) in the water within 72 hours.

But before Nemo touches the water, the unmanned remote vessel has already been down to take a look over the site, deal with any immediate emergencies, the massive crane and decompression chambers have been bolted onto the support ship, and the right people in the right place.

But why is the unit based with the Navy in Faslane? "Britain is internationally known, we have a peerless reputation," stated Cdr Jonty Powis (Retd), the NSRS rescue manager.

"Collision is the most common cause of submarine loss, whether seabed or surface ships."

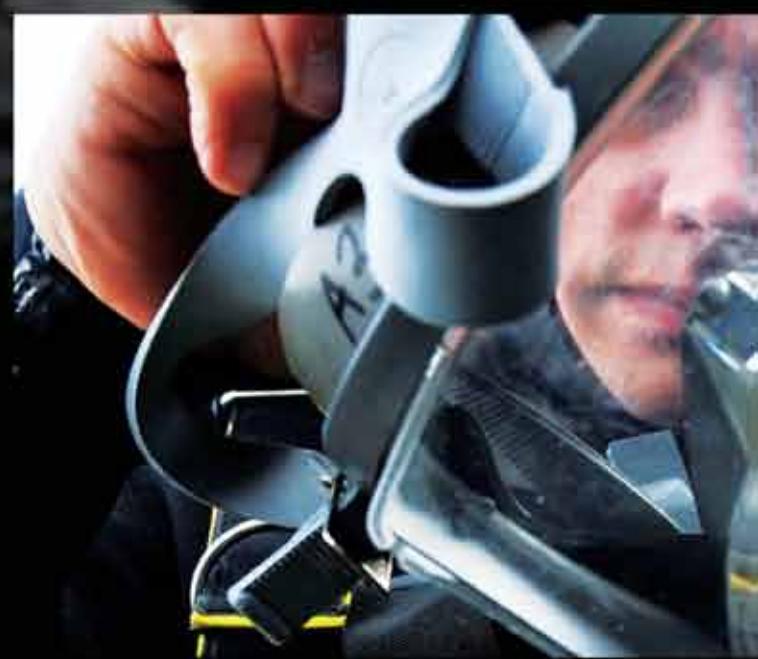
Certain submarine losses have been high profile – the Russian submarine Kursk and the Priz-class AS-28, itself a rescue submarine that needed rescuing. But these are not one-off incidents, submarine losses since World War 2 number over 30.

"We have a core team of 13, we need 56 people embedded on the ship, and two watches of decompression chamber operators, medical staff and command staff."

He added: "This is a world-beating system. Similar systems have been exported to Singapore, China, and more. Five systems in the world are UK built."

"The ability we demonstrated to go to the Kursk made everybody sit up and take note. And the Priz rescue finally capped it."

"The Brits quietly loaded the system into the airplane, got there and did the job."



deep breath

at the Faslane base, is a comprehensive system that can get to any 'subsun' – military speak but the name does pretty much say it all – within the UK's operating area in less than three days.

That's three days to shift the great unwieldy launch crane and kit and weld it onto the hired commercial vessel that will be mothership, three days to fly out container after container that holds all the essential operating systems on board, three days to fit out the decompression chambers and three days until the submersible itself (known as Nemo although everyone denies it...) first reaches the sunk submarine.

And in case you should think that this is an expensive insurance system for an unheard-of event, there have been at least 34 submarines sunk since the end of World War 2.

It is the divers of NDG who will man the decompression chambers in the event of an emergency with a British submarine, working with the Rolls-Royce team who manage the system and drive the vehicle and the submarine, and medical experts of the Royal Navy.

"I have a team of 45 guys. And I have never seen them all here at one time," said Lt Cdr White. "There are always some on courses, guys training on the NSRS, off working on normal day-to-day jobbing, always a team on standby for engineering, god forbid some might actually take some leave. One of our petty officers is out in Afghanistan at the moment."

"And we still have to have the duty watches and the rest."

But it is this hectic pace which seems to win over many of the clearance divers based up in the Scottish realm.

Leading Diver 'Shiner' Wright puts it simply: "I prefer it up here. I've been on various different drafts, and I always seem to end up back here."

"I like it because it's a hardworking team. Other drafts don't seem to be as active. Here we are always busy."

"Up here I teach, do engineering work, did an IED task last night – that's all in one week."

"I've got lots of friends out in the commercial world, and all they do is dive. But here that is just one aspect of the job."

But Shiner does note one word of caution for prospective divers – "Claustrophobic. Claustrophobic is the word I'd use. You can't be claustrophobic and be a diver."

AB(Diver) Chris Hudson is freshly arrived in Scotland from the Fleet Diving School, but says that the NDG's reputation is as "the working team".

He admits: "I had looked into diving on the outside, and stumbled across the Navy's website. It seemed challenging, and it has been a good experience."

He said: "The Northern Diving Group are always busy. They do the most diving, the most work. There's a lot more satisfaction from the range of work up here."

Their boss credits this to their location in the heart of the base: "Northern Diving Group is part of Clyde Naval Base. We feel part of it, we're well-liked, and we provide a tangible service."

"We're often the first people waiting on a jetty when a ship comes alongside."

"Far too often divers are out on a limb. Seen as slightly different. We don't get seen on ships very often, in fact we don't get seen a lot. In the Falklands, the diving units have only recently been added to the memorial."

"But here we are seen as part of the base."

But while the Navy might not see much of the divers on a day-to-day basis, for many people around the UK's coastline the divers can be their regular contact with the Senior Service.

It is this local effort clearing historic ordnance or abandoned pyrotechnics on beaches, shorelines and coasts around the UK that brings the public face to face with the Navy's divers.

And it is this effort by NDG that has won them the Firmin Sword of Peace – the military award that recognises humanitarian endeavour.

Lt Cdr White explained: "Normally it goes for big humanitarian efforts – disaster relief and the like. It's very rare for it to be given for a small local effort."

"But we're constantly in among the small coastal towns around Scotland. We're up at Garvie Island military range for bomb disposal, and because of that our team has been invited to attend the Cape Wrath Highland Games, we got involved in a tug-of-war. We are a small part of that community."

The dive team were also presented with the white ensign from the war grave of HMS Royal Oak after their recent dive to replace the memorial standard. "Royal Oak is another example. The reason we were given that ensign is because for years and years we have gone up there for the Royal British Legion."

"But this year they said, as it was the 70th, rather than present it to one of the Legion sites around the country, they wanted to give it to us as someone who does this all the time."

Lt Cdr White concluded: "People come here as an AB, as a killick, as a PO, as a chief. They want to come back here."

"It is a work hard, play hard team."



● AB(Diver) Scotty Telford and Leading Diver Lee Duffy prepare (left) and in the water in the Enclosed Space Diving System used by the Northern Diving Group for underwater engineering and maintenance



Some like it cold



THIS, believe it or not, is not an unusual sight.

No, in her quarter-century history, Her Majesty's Submarine *Tireless* has paid quite a few visits to the top of the world.

And just for good measure she's been to the other end of the globe; not under Antarctica obviously, but at least to the icy waters of South Georgia.

The Devonport-based boat paid three visits to the North Pole in the first six years of her life.

She was there again in 2004 and, most recently, in 2007 (the work at the Polar cap is cunningly titled an *IceX* – *Ice EXercise*).

There's been nothing as magnificently desolate for the *Tireless* submariners to witness recently, alas.

The boat spent much of last year at

home in Devonport going through an extended readiness period.

That drew to an end in the autumn, but having been alongside for more than 12 months, a few cobwebs needed shaking off the *Tireless* deeps.

A 'whole ship training week' was devoted first to instruction about resuming life on board a nuclear-powered submarine, before the deeps climbed down the ladders into *Tireless* for more practical exercises.

That meant dragging submariners out of their normal compartments aboard and putting them somewhere they wouldn't usually work – before showing them how to react to an emergency at that spot.

The 'whole ship week' was the first time the entire *Tireless* crew had been together. So, to help faces old and new bond the submariners headed to the

wilds of Dartmoor and a team-building exercise.

Small groups were expected to navigate themselves around the bleak landscape before reaching their final destination (the added incentive: it was the Plume of Feathers pub in Princetown...).

It's not the only bit of physical exercise/team building the *Tireless* submariners knuckled down to during their boat's overhaul.

An 11-strong team took part in the Nijmegen March – a four-day 103-mile trek around Holland (well, at least it's flat...). In preparation for that, the submariners had undertaken a two-day tramp around the Oxfordshire countryside (which isn't quite as flat).

On top of that, a 16-strong team of senior and junior rates was despatched to the Brecon Beacons to find some

'grit' (the RN's word *du jour*) at the Tal-y-bont outdoor leadership training centre.

On a less-physically-demanding level, some of *Tireless*' men headed to the boat's affiliated town of Rugby, calling in on the local Sea Cadet unit (appropriately TS *Tireless*), Brooke School to give a talk on life in the Silent Service and face a Q&A session from pupils, and the civic offices to see Rugby's deputy mayor.

And back in Devonport... The boat is preparing to return to sea after her lengthy hiatus under the watchful eyes of the Flag Officer Sea Training's submarine wing, before a spell of BOST and, ultimately, deploying.

Tireless is earmarked to serve until 2013.

Only one previous RN warship has carried the name *Tireless* – also a

submarine.

She was one of the legendary T-boats which were the backbone of the Silent Service during the mid-20th Century.

Ordered as part of the 1941 programme to replace losses and bolster the fleet, she was launched in March 1943 but commissioned with less than a month of war in Europe left to run.

Instead, *Tireless* was sent to the Far East – but war with Japan was over by the time she arrived in theatre.

Instead, she took part in a 'show the flag' tour of the Pacific – a tour which proved very popular and cemented the feeling that the first *Tireless* was a 'slap-happy ship'.

She paid off in the mid-60s and was broken up in 1968.

Picture: PO(Phot) Terry Seward

Facts and figures



Class: Trafalgar-class Fleet submarine
Pennant number: S92
Motto: *Esto perpetua* – be perpetual
Builder: Vickers, Barrow-in-Furness
Laid down: June 6, 1981
Launched: March 17, 1984
Commissioned: October 5, 1985
Displacement: 4,740 tons (surfaced), 5,200 tons (submerged)
Length: 280ft (85m)
Beam: 32ft (10m)
Draught: 31ft (9.5m)
Speed: c.32 knots
Complement: 130
Propulsion: 1 x Rolls Royce PWR nuclear reactor; 2 x GEC turbines; 2 x WH Allen turbo generators; 2 x Paxman diesel alternators
Armament: Tomahawk Block IV cruise missiles; Spearfish torpedoes

photographic memories



COUNTER-piracy patrol, 1908-style – courtesy of the archives of the Imperial War Museum. Sailors from cruiser HMS *Philomel* pose with Arab (standing) and Afghan (seated) pirates and gun-runners in the Arabian Gulf in July 1908. The ship had been despatched to Aden to pick up troops before heading for British Somaliland (part of present-day Somalia) to suppress an uprising. After landing the soldiers, the cruiser took up station in the Arabian Sea and prevented gun-runners and pirates aiding the rebels. (HU 103199)

■ THIS photograph – and 9,999,999 others from a century of war and peace – can be viewed or purchased at www.iwmcollections.org.uk, by emailing photos@iwm.org.uk, or by phoning 0207 416 5333.

HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No. 69

Lt Frederick Hindes and Chief ERA 'Sam' Hine, AM

THE sacrifices of the Silent Service in WW2 are often eclipsed by the terrible toll suffered by the U-bootwaffe.

Four out of five German submariners were lost in the second global conflagration.

The odds Britain's deeps faced were barely better: in 1943 and 1944, two out of three boats did not return from patrols.

Indeed, throughout the war, more than 80 submarines were lost to accident or enemy action.

In the war's aftermath, the Admiralty sought to increase the odds of survival and set up a committee under a former submarine depot ship (HMS *Medway*) and a carrier (HMS *Formidable*) commander, Capt Philip Ruck-Keene.

When it reported, many of Ruck-Keene's recommendations were acted upon – the most visible of which is the escape tower which dominates the Gosport seafront.

The Admiralty was faster to introduce some suggestions than others; Ruck-Keene wanted to see insulated survival suits for every man. Three years after his recommendation, the suits were only slowly reaching the boats. Such sluggishness would help condemn three score men to their deaths.

HMS *Truculent* was a boat with a fine record – she had served with distinction in the North Sea and Far East during WW2.

She continued to serve after the war and as the 1950s began, she emerged from refit at Chatham.

January 12 1950 had been a day of successful trials in the Thames estuary. After dark this fateful Thursday she began to make her way back to Sheerness on the surface.

Also heading down the Thames that night was the Swedish oil tanker *Divina*, bound for Ipswich, then her native land.

Truculent's crew saw her – three lights shone brightly on the tanker. But the submariners were convinced *Divina* was not moving.

By the time they realised the merchantman was moving, it was too late to avoid a collision.

For a few seconds, the submarine was impaled on the *Divina*. The two vessels separated, *Truculent* heeled to port before righting herself briefly, then sank rapidly by the bow.

The party on the fin was swept into the Thames; five were picked up within an hour suffering from the effects of exposure and hypothermia.

The crippled submarine settled in barely 50ft of water. Her first lieutenant, Lt Frederick Hindes demonstrated a "calm demeanour", issued "clear orders" and "maintained perfect discipline".

There were 64 people still aboard *Truculent*, including 18 shipwrights and engineers from Chatham dockyard. Hindes ordered all of them aft and then determined that escape, rather than waiting to be rescued, was the best course of action.

There they split into two groups. Hindes directed the escape in the stern section, a near namesake oversaw the ascent from the engine room.

Chief ERA Francis 'Sam' Hine was coming to the end of his 22 years' service. He had survived the loss of HMS *Saracen*; after ten hours in the water, he'd been picked up by the Italians and spent the rest of WW2 as a prisoner.

Hine allocated the limited number of breathing sets to the weakest swimmers, outlined the escape drill, then ensured that he was the very last man to leave the compartment when it flooded.

Frederick Hindes was the first man to leave the aft compartment – but not by choice. He was blown violently out of *Truculent* as the escape hatch was opened. He was never seen again.

Nor was Sam Hine found. Like most of the men who escaped the sunken boat, he died of drowning or exposure in the January night. Just ten men who had risen to the surface of the Thames were saved; the immersion suits recommended by Philip Ruck-Keene would probably have reduced the death toll dramatically.

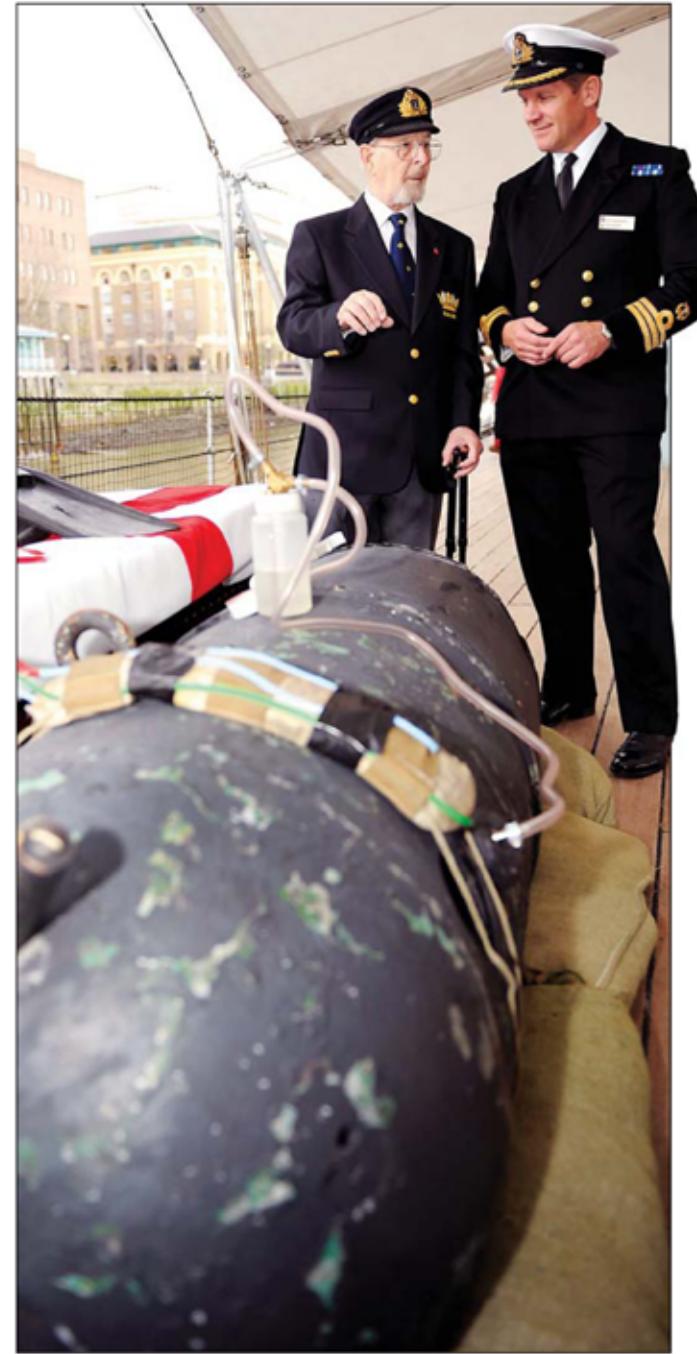
Frederick Hindes and Sam Hine had acted correctly. The conduct of every man aboard, the citation for the two submariners' Albert Medal stated, "was in full accord with the great traditions of the Royal Navy, but the splendid example set by Lt Hindes and CPO Hine was beyond praise."





● Lt Noel Cashford captivates visitors to HMS Belfast with deeds of the RN's wartime bomb disposal work and (right) explains to Cdr Peter Greenwood, CO of the Fleet Diving Squadron, how the magnetic mine was disabled

Pictures: PC(Phot) Mez Merrill, DPRN



'We still make the long, lonely walk...'

IN LIFE and death struggles between nations, the weight of numbers, of matériel, of ordnance dropped or fired, determine the outcome.

There's the Russian steamroller crushing the Wehrmacht in the East, the British and American air forces pulverising German cities, the 5,000 ships disgorging hundreds of thousands of men and tanks on to the shores of Normandy.

But just occasionally, the acts of individuals tip the balance.

There's S/Lt David Balme seizing an Enigma machine from a sinking U-boat. Or Lt John Moffat crippling the Bismarck with a torpedo launched by an antiquated Swordfish.

And there's the bravery of Lt Cdr John Ouvry, a name perhaps little known to most Britons – outside the mine warfare community that is.

In the autumn of 1939, it was not the Luftwaffe, not the U-boat, not German surface raiders which posed the greatest threat to Britain's lifelines, but the magnetic mine.

Hitler only possessed 1,500 at the war's outbreak. He, or rather his aircraft and submarines, laid 470 in the approaches to Britain's ports in the first three months of the conflict.

The weapons rested on the sea bed, waited for a ship to pass overhead, whereupon the vessel's magnetic field would detonate the mine.

The results were devastating. On November 21 1939 alone, the destroyer HMS Gypsy was sunk, the back of brand-new cruiser HMS Belfast was broken in the Firth of Forth and the Japanese liner *Terukuni Maru* was crippled in the Thames Estuary.

The mine menace dominated Cabinet discussions that autumn – and with good reason. Nearly 300,000 tons of shipping fell victim to the underwater devices in the first three months of the war. Britain's shipyards could not keep pace with the losses.

Yet in his weekly radio address to the nation, Neville Chamberlain



declared: "We shall master it as we have mastered the U-boat."

Chamberlain could be so confident thanks to the bravery of Lt Cdr John Ouvry (pictured above) who had unlocked the secrets of Germany's secret weapon.

On November 22 1939, two mines had been parachuted into the Thames Estuary by a German bomber. They had landed not in the water but on the mudflats at Shoeburyness, near Southend. Their fall was spotted and reported to the Navy.

There was "a state of considerable strain" at the Admiralty thanks to the mine menace. It turned to John Ouvry to investigate "and recover it at all costs".

What he found was a fat black metal object, 6ft 7in long, 26in in diameter with half a dozen 'horns' sticking out of its 'head'.

Rubbings were carefully made and overnight special brass instruments were produced so Ouvry could work on the mine without triggering it.

Over several nerve-racking hours in the Essex mud, the officer removed the fuse and the hydrostatic valve before declaring the mine 'safe'.

It was promptly loaded on to a truck and dispatched to HMS Vernon in Portsmouth for further inspection, where experts would learn its secrets and devise an antidote: degaussing, neutralising the magnetic polarity of a ship's hull.

Ouvry's assistant Lt Cdr Roger Lewis was dispatched to the Admiralty to report on the operation's progress. He found himself addressing First Sea Lord Dudley Pound and Winston Churchill.

The latter declared: "We owe a great deal to the public spirit of Lt Cdr Lewis and his colleague Lt Cdr Ouvry, who have been up against it today."

The man who rendered the device safe – and rendered his country a great service – was awarded the DSO by the King before the year was out.

John Ouvry would be 'up against it' for the remainder of the war, either at the business end of mine disposal or passing on his expertise to a new generation of sailors at Vernon.

Among them was a young Lt Noel Cashford, guest of honour at the celebration of John Ouvry's achievements aboard HMS Belfast, 70 years after that act of bravery off Southend.

The 87-year-old rendered safe some 200 devices during his mine disposal career – "I have had my moments," he says, playing down his achievements and bravery.

His passion for this black art, and his respect for John Ouvry, who passed away in 1993 at the age of 96, remains undiminished.

He tried to read Ouvry's rather matter-of-fact report, but stopped.

"It brings a lump to my throat," he said.

"People say I 'knew' John Ouvry. I didn't just know him. I loved the man – he was a wonderful person. My life has been all the richer for knowing him."

"Thanks to John Ouvry, Britain captured her biggest prize since the beginning of the war. He was the bravest of the brave."

He was, but his bravery didn't come quite quickly enough for John Harrison. "I only wish he'd found the mine a month earlier," the 95-year-old lamented.

He had every reason to lament. He was in Belfast's 'A' turret when the light cruiser triggered that

magnetic mine in the Forth.

"The ship jumped up about 16ft. You felt her 'bounce' – quite an experience when you think about the size of her," the former ordnance artificer recalled.

"We had no idea what it was – we just knew that a lot of merchant ships had been sunk by this unknown device."

One of those unknown devices is now displayed aboard Belfast not far from 'A' turret. It's a reminder of how close the cruiser came to disaster – and a reminder of John Ouvry's bravery.

"Today's generation should know about the heroes of yesteryear and those who do the same dangerous job today," Mr Cashford said emphatically.

So it was fortunate that Cdr Peter Greenwood, Commanding Officer of the Fleet Diving Squadron, was on hand to explain to doyens of mine warfare and bomb disposal past and present that John Ouvry's legacy lived on.

"Right now, there are naval bomb disposal officers in Afghanistan, where bombs inflict 80 per cent of the casualties," he said.

"Today's divers are still the same characters. They still make that long, lonely walk to deal with a bomb. Our people remain at the front end of the business."

Ouvry's contemporaries and successors intend to erect a permanent memorial to the mine warfare/diving branches at their spiritual home.

HMS Vernon closed in 1996 and the site has become the Gunwharf Quays shopping-leisure-housing complex.

Gunwharf's bosses have agreed to allow a monument to be installed at the western end of the former non-tidal creek, and Australian sculptor Les Johnson has designed a statue of a diver working on a mine anchored to the seabed.

It will take £250,000 to realise the sculpture project and organisers are one fifth of their way to their target. You can give your support to the Project Vernon initiative at www.vernon-monument.org

■ With thanks to David Ouvry and Lt Cdr Rob Hoole, RNMCDOA.

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Commodore solves old mystery

THE Naval Regional Commander for Wales and West of England has solved a 64-year mystery surrounding missing war medals.

Cdr Jamie Miller is something of a naval historian and a self-confessed amateur detective – so this challenge was right up his street.

During discussions over links between the city of Exeter and Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender, the Lord Mayor of Exeter, Cllr John Winterbottom, remarked that his father was ex-Navy.

Leslie Winterbottom had joined up in 1922 and saw plenty of action in World War 2, being awarded four campaign medals, including the Africa Star – but for some reason the medals were never formally presented.

Cdr Miller said: "I like nothing better than a naval mystery and I thought the best place to start was with Capt Chris Page and his wonderful team at the Naval Historical Branch.

"With their help, we found out that during an illustrious career, Leslie Winterbottom served on the sixth HMS Defender, so there was a tremendously apt and emotional tie here."

"It seemed a very fitting tribute to strike new campaign medals for Leslie and present them posthumously to his son, Exeter's Lord Mayor, John Winterbottom."

The timing could not have been better for the Lord Mayor, as he was able to wear his father's medals with pride at the launch of HMS Defender.

Cllr Winterbottom said: "While growing up, my family and I had often heard about my father's adventures during World War 2, although he couldn't produce the medals to back up his claim."

"I am most grateful to Cdr Miller for this unexpected and delightful gift."

Dream wedding

THE winners of a dream wedding day are an injured Welsh Guardsman and his fiancée.

The prize was offered by chocolate fountain company Chocorococo and a number of firms supplying the cake, rings, clothing and other vital elements for the big day, as reported in our August 2009 edition.

Winners Dale Leach and Alexandra Lewis live in South Wales and plan to marry in the summer.

Dale was injured by a bomb in Afghanistan last May, suffering massive internal injuries and having his left leg amputated.



● MA Kate Nesbitt with her Military Cross outside Buckingham Palace

Proud day for Kate

NAVY medic Kate Nesbitt has received her Military Cross at an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

Her citation reads: "Under fire and under pressure, her commitment and courage were inspirational and made the difference between life and death.

"She performed in the highest traditions of the Royal Navy."

During her deployment to Afghanistan, Kate was attached to 3 Commando Brigade whose unit medical support is provided by members of the Royal Navy.

Of her visit to the Palace, Kate said: "It was the proudest day of my life and I feel so proud to be able to enjoy it with my Mum and Dad – it will stay with me forever.

"Prince Charles was very charming and very friendly... really, really nice, he was brilliant, absolutely fantastic!"

Kate received hers from the Prince of Wales for her courage in tending wounded Royal Marines under fire from the Taliban in Helmand Province this year.

The medic was working closely with Charlie Coy, 1st Battalion The Rifles when she found herself under fire from the Taliban.

She repeatedly braved enemy fire to rush forward to save the lives of injured colleagues.

"He talked to me about the incident and why I received it [the Military Cross] and that he was really proud of me."

She continued: "This is why I joined the Royal Navy, to work with such fantastic people.

"As a medic, that was what I was there for, and as their [Charlie Company of 1st Battalion the Rifles] medic I promised that for the whole tour I was there to look after them.

"I just did my job as best I could and tried my hardest.

"As soon as there was a call that there was a casualty it was time to step up.

"It is hugely important for the

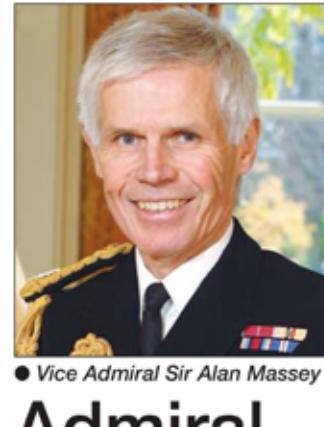
public to recognise that the Royal Navy is in Afghanistan and that we are doing the jobs that we are trained to do and doing them really, really well.

"My place is so much valued as a medic and I am very proud to have been a part of their team and I look forward to going again.

"I would never have thought in a million years that someone would write me up for an honour such as this.

"I will wear it with pride on behalf of all my friends in the Royal Navy."

Over 200 Royal Navy personnel continue to serve in Afghanistan in both ground and air operations.



● Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey

Admiral knighted by Queen

VICE Admiral Sir Alan Massey has been knighted by the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

As Second Sea Lord, Admiral Massey is responsible for personnel matters throughout the Naval Service and for directing the affairs of the Naval Home Command.

Of the occasion, Admiral Massey said: "This is not something to which you can lay any claim: it is a wonderful honour, and it is humbling to be fortunate enough to have been selected for this distinction."

He added: "I have been inspired by every ship's company with whom I have had the privilege to serve.

"The Royal Navy demands a great deal from its people, yet their loyalty, commitment and enthusiasm never cease to amaze me – and never more so than when they are called upon to deal with real pressure and adversity. It is a fantastic team to be in."

Despite his hectic schedule Admiral Massey finds time to support his keen interests in sport and music.

He is Commodore of the RN Sailing Association, vice-president of RN Football, president of the RN Volunteer Bands Association and plays the guitar.



● Sgt 'Daz' Notman RM gets busy with the mess tins and hexamine blocks as he demonstrates his culinary skills to members of the public at the Dartmouth Food Festival

Picture: Victoria Davies (VT Group)

Pot mess hits the spot

A POT mess from standard issue ration packs dispelled any misconceptions the public may have had about Services food during a culinary festival at Dartmouth.

Sgt 'Daz' Notman RM, part of the Ceremonial Training Team at BRNC, also instructs officer cadets in 'living in the field'.

"It is important that the cadets learn how to fully use the ration packs they are issued and demonstrating this at the food festival was a great opportunity to teach the public as well," said Daz.

"In true service fashion I threw everything into the pot mess, and the gentleman who acted as taster was most complimentary," Sgt Notman said.

The ingredients are certainly diverse, as it included lamb stew and dumplings, treacle pudding, bacon and beans with lemon powder, oxtail soup, Tabasco sauce and a smear of Marmite...

The ship's company of HMS Cumberland was

treated to a flight-deck masterclass by Gordon Ramsay protégé Matthew Pickop.

During a break in Dubai Matthew, Executive Chef at Verre, was invited to show his skills in the galley – and although he turns down plenty of similar offers, he felt this was one he could not refuse as his father served in HMS Broadsword, another Type 22 frigate, during the Falklands Conflict.

Cumberland's chefs were keen to show Matthew their own skills – led by PO Darren Knowles, they laid on a meal of scallops on an avocado tortilla, roast fillet of beef and home-made treacle tart.

Matthew later described his day with the Navy as "filled with inspirational people, fantastic hospitality and stunning food to boot."

He added: "The guys and girls on board HMS Cumberland are not only a credit to Capt Dutton, but a credit to the United Kingdom and Her Majesty's service."

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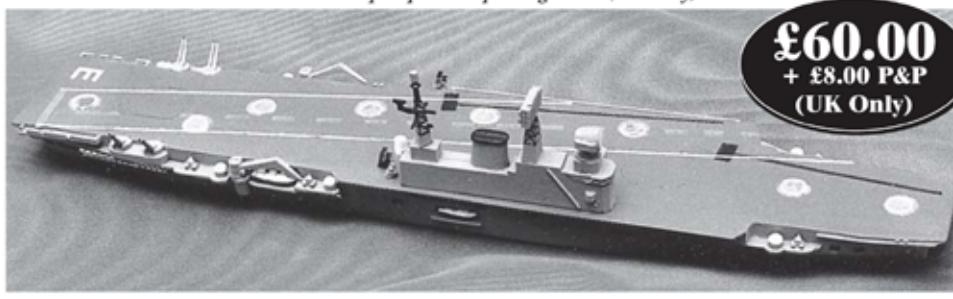
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● LAET Stewart Wright

Stewart takes the bronze

ROYAL Navy technician Stewart Wright has scooped a medal at an international skills competition.

Stewart, a leading air engineer, won bronze for aircraft maintenance at the WorldSkills 2009 competition in Canada.

He had been crowned Technician of the Year in the UK Skills contest earlier last year.

WorldSkills, for both military and civilian trainees, attracted 848 competitors from 51 countries competing in 45 different skills, from hairdressing to web design.

Stewart had to complete a number of tasks, including pre-flight checks for a fixed-wing aircraft and a full aircraft rig.



● PO Kirsten Sare

Picture: Craig Keating (VT Flagship)

"I was quite a bit older than most of the students on course," Kirsten admitted, "but the whole thing was fascinating and I really hope I will be able to break into that area of employment."

"It does seem quite scary to be leaving the RN after all this time, but the Service I joined is hugely different from the one I leave today, not least for the fantastic leaps in communications technology."

"Things were different in 1987 – not necessarily better, just different!"

PSP scheme wins trophy for RN pair

HAND-held gaming consoles were the bright idea which won a trophy for two RN officers.

Yes, we know that Lts Ian Stubbs and Alex Smith did not come up with the idea of the Sony PSP.

But what they did do was use the consoles to make training material accessible to gadget-savvy RN students.

Using bespoke software, trainees can work on their maths and engineering skills using the hand-held gear at home or on deployment before they attend their courses, speeding up the learning process once they go into the classroom.

The idea was a GEMS winner, and was one of three shortlisted as a finalist at the ideasUK awards ceremony.

The other two were Lt Col Nigel Linge (Retd), who suggested a way of making vastly more efficient use of QinetiQ's facilities for ammunition testing, and WO1 Ewan MacDonald, who came up with a Universal Electronic Counter Measures Deployment Frame for explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams.

Each of the finalists had to present their projects and the progress of their suggestions to a panel of independent judges during the ideasUK conference, in Chester.

They were competing with 60 others from UK companies, public organisations and international firms.

The Navy's duo's idea saw them take the Public Sector trophy, with the judges describing their efforts as "an exemplar of innovation within the public sector and an object lesson for the private sector to consider when addressing the training needs of both experienced staff and new entrants."

Engineer to head safety organisation

A FORMER Royal Navy engineer has been elected the next president of the world's largest health and safety professional body.

Steve Granger (50) is the president elect of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), which has more than 35,000 members in 85 countries.

Having joined the Navy at the age of 18, Steve spent 13 years in the Services before beginning a career in health and safety; he is now director of his own consultancy, the Granger Partnership.

Speaking of his time in the Forces, Steve said: "Working for the Royal Navy gave me an insight into the management and maintenance of industrial plant and machinery, electrical systems, refrigeration, pressurised systems, hazardous fluid handling, emergency procedures and fire prevention, all of which have been critical to the development of my career."

"There's no doubt that my time with the Royal Navy helped me to carve out my career – it helped me develop the skills and life experience I needed to move into health and safety."

Trafalgar Prize for weapons specialist

A COLLINGWOOD officer has won the Trafalgar Prize for the best RN post-graduate after achieving a record average score of 88 per cent in his masters degree.

Lt Cdr Ade Richardson, part of the Maritime Capability Trials and Assessment organisation, is an underwater weapons specialist.

He enrolled on the year-long MSc in Engineering and Management at the University of Portsmouth to further his understanding and knowledge.

Comms connection is finally broken

WHEN PO Kirsten Sare surrendered her RN identity card and left the RN last month, she rang down the curtain of the former specialisation of telephonist.

The Telephonist Branch actually ceased to exist 15 years ago, and Kirsten saw many of her colleagues leave the Service fairly soon after.

But Kirsten took the opportunities offered by the RN and successfully completed 22 years of service.

"When I look back to 1987 when I joined the then Women's Royal Naval Service I can see a wealth of differences," said Kirsten.

"We weren't allowed to go to sea, carry and fire a weapon or run in Field Gun teams.

"All our instructors were female, other than the PTIs, and our firefighting training was minimal – along the lines of how to put out a chip pan fire."

"The constant professional determination and dedication of service personnel remains the same though."

A former Sea Cadet, Kirsten completed her basic training then went to Cudrose for specialist training – telephonists were an integral part of the communication system, and she learned her trade on the traditional plug boards.

"Colleagues today readily forget there were no such things as 'level 0' lines or mobile phones, so all outside calls had to be made through an operator or be made from a telephone box," she said.



Service exchanges were based predominately at air stations, so for Kirsten Yeovilton and Cudrose were her draft destinations.

In 1990 the announcement was made to put female personnel to sea, so ending the WRNS as a separate service.

There was no male equivalent of the telephonist specialisation, and Kirsten, like her colleagues, opted out of sea service, limiting their career prospects.

One job that had always appealed to Kirsten was to be a Part 1 Instructor at HMS Raleigh, so she grabbed the chance to take up that role with officer apprentices.

"There is really nothing more satisfying for me than to see a young person develop during the challenges of basic training, either at Raleigh or here in Britannia Royal Naval College," said Kirsten.

"Those first experiences can affect a person's service career in every way and huge responsibility lies on the shoulders of the trainees."

Between working at Raleigh and as a team member for the RN Officers Initial Training, PO Sare did more general duties including manpower allocation and running accommodation for Phase 2 trainees.

Kirsten has had a long held interest in the world of cosmetics, which she started to develop by attending night classes in beauty make up before progressing to take a diploma in theatrical and media make up.

She opted to attend the Delamar Academy in London to train as a make-up artist.

Courage award for aviators

THE crew of Rescue 193, 771 Naval Air Squadron, have been recognised by the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators (GAPAN) with the prestigious Prince Philip Helicopter Rescue Award.

The award was presented for displaying "outstanding courage and devotion to duty" for an arduous mission to rescue a severely-injured fisherman in gale force 8 conditions.

The team was scrambled at the request of Spanish authorities to help a man on a fishing boat in

rough seas 150 miles off Scilly.

Rescue 193 located the ship in the dark, and CPO Dave Rigg managed to get on board despite the boat rolling severely and rising and falling 45ft in the swell.

The injured sailor had almost been cut in half by a snapped cable, and despite the aviators' efforts – CPO Rigg spent an hour trying to stabilise him before he could be taken aloft – he died before they could land him ashore.

The Navy crew had been on duty for nearly 20 hours by the time they returned to Cudrose.



● (From left) Nigel Pardoe and Tom Copeland, both ex-CPOSRs, and Tony Knott, ex-RN Hydrographic Branch lieutenant, on board Geo Atlantic

Droggies reunited

THE end of 2009 found no fewer than three ex-RN droggies working together on board a seismic ship in the Southern Hemisphere.

Nigel 'Pedro' Pardoe and Tom 'TC' Copeland, both former CPOSRs, and Tony Knott, a former Hydrographic Branch Lieutenant, are working on the Fugro Seismic Vessel Geo Atlantic off North-West Australia.

All three have worked continuously in the seismic industry since leaving the Navy, and agree that without the introduction to the profession

provided by the RN, then they wouldn't be where they are today.

Tony works as a navigation client rep, looking after the interests of the oil company on whose behalf a survey is carried out.

Tom works for Fugro in field support and training, shuttling round all Fugro Seismic vessels, while Nigel is regular crew on the Geo Atlantic seismic team.

Among them they can draw on more than 80 years experience.

Tom and Nigel live in the UK, whilst Tony's home is in the Philippines.



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Dummy



NOW here's a question for Fleet Air Arm buffs.

Where would you find the largest Harrier formation in the Royal Navy?

You're probably thinking 'Cottesmore' (home of the Naval Strike Wing). You might be thinking 'Wittering', where the fast jet jockeys learn the art of flying the fabled jet.

And you'd be wrong on both counts (aside from numbers, there's also the small matter of the RAF actually owning said jets...).

No, the RN's largest Harrier unit rumbles and roars at 50°5'14" N, 5°14'57" W. The jump jets still have the famous punching gauntlet (800 NAS) and winged tridents (801 NAS) emblems on their tails.

For those of you whose longitude and latitude are a little fuzzy, that's RNAS Culdrose, or to be more precise 600 (ish) feet of tarmac, the 'dummy deck'.

It's home to eight Sea Harriers, a couple of T8 trainers, three Sea Kings, a pair of Merlins, a solitary Lynx, plus a 'carrier superstructure' (aka small prefab hut with windows

• Trainee AH Catherine Fraser prepares to tackle a blaze in the unique domestic fire trainer at Culdrose as (left) colleague Wilson Tulakepa deals with a flash over



There is arguably no more dangerous job in the surface fleet than working on a flight deck. Jet blasts, noise, the threat of crashes, fires, weaponry 'cooking off', aircraft toppling over the side. **RICHARD HARGREAVES** visited the School of Flight Deck Operations to see how handlers are trained.

overlooking the deck, branded with the pennant number R01).

The aim is to recreate the deck of Illustrious or Ark Royal (minus the ski ramp). It's all marked out like the real thing except that here, if you run over the white line on the edge you end up on the grass rather than in the catwalk or, worse, in the drink.

I've been fortunate to watch Harriers take off on many occasions. From Flyco. From the 'goofing gallery'. From the flight deck. Even from beneath the ramp.

But I've never witnessed it from inside the cockpit (the lack of a pilot's licence being a minor hindrance...).

Courtesy of the back seat of a

T8, I now have a pilot's-eye view of a flight deck.

My 'pilot' for today is Dave 'Eggy' Eggleston, one of half a dozen ex-ratings who maintain the school's Harriers (all are in pretty much full working order with the exception that their throttles are restricted to prevent take-off).

Now we've said before that the Harrier is a tough old bird to fly. She's a tough old bird even to drive – the maintainers go through something like 60 hours' training before they're allowed on to the dummy deck for a solo 'flight'.

On the tarmac, a few handlers wearing shiny blue surcoats (they're the trainees), plus a

smaller number of sailors in day-glo yellow jackets (the instructors) guide the half a dozen Harriers lined up for launch today.

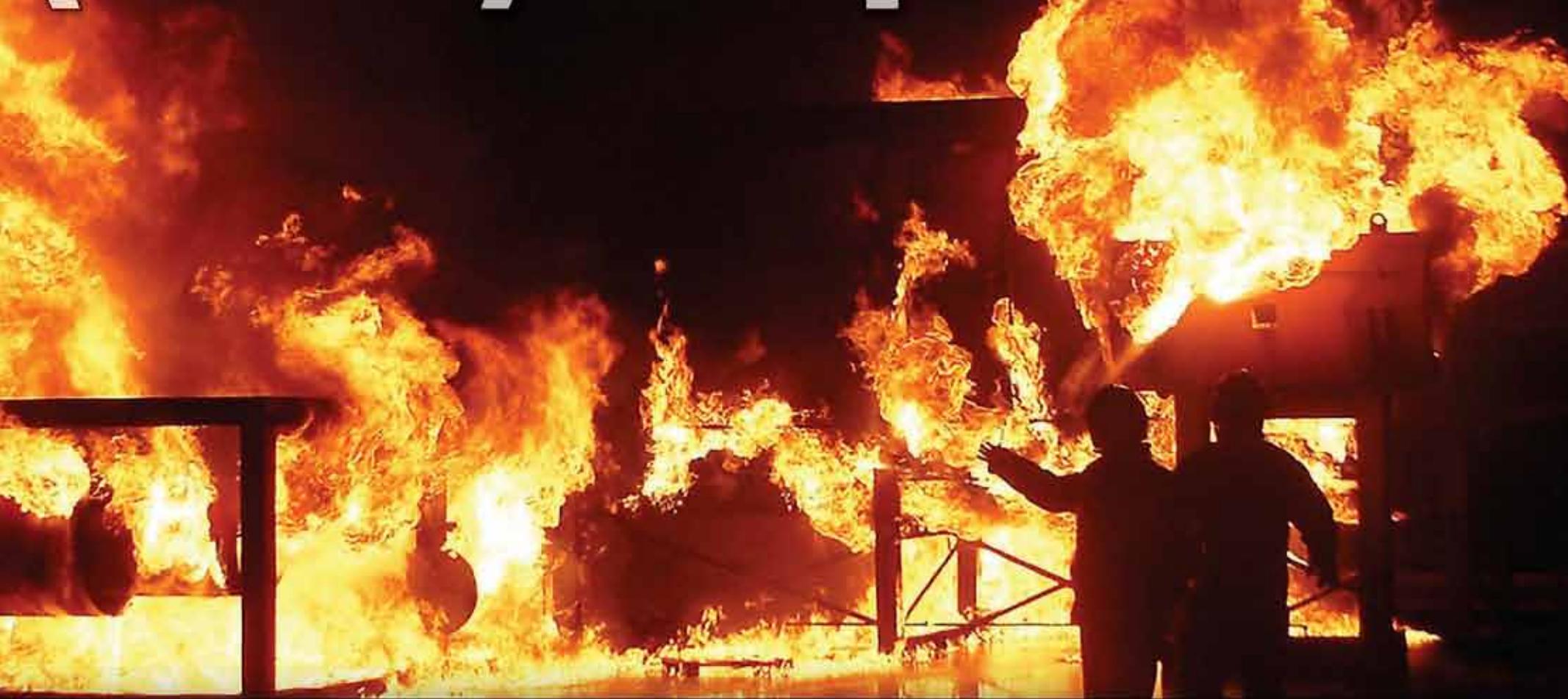
"A lot of these lads have probably never been on a ship and some of them won't even have a driving licence. It's a steep learning curve," says Eggy.

So what do you notice from the cockpit? Well, you realise it's actually a lot quieter inside than outside.

You also realise that for all the technology and modern comms, you can't beat a simple hand gesture. Indeed, a simple hand gesture is all you have; the pilot can converse with Flyco over



(deck) corporation



the radio – but he cannot talk with the flight deck.

Hands form an 'A', immediately followed by a big circular movement of the right arm: *Switch on auxiliary power*.

Hand pointing at the Harrier intake, followed by a big circular movement of the right arm: *Start the engine*.

Arms raised, fists clenched: *On brakes*.

Arms lowered, hands and thumbs facing out: *Out chocks*.

Arms raised, fists unclenched: *Off brakes*. Both arms beckoning forwards: *Advance*.

Arm moved across body: *Passing you over to another director*.

Right arm then left arm aligns us with centre line of the flight deck.

Arms raised, fists clenched: *Stop*.

Arms lowered and crossed in front of the body. *Don't move*.

All eyes now on the captain of the flight deck. Red flag on his head: *Stand-by, power-up engine*.

'Captain' looks up and down the flight deck to check clear and safe for launch. Red flag lowered, green flag raised. *We're off*.

I say 'we're off', but with the throttle restricted, the best we can do is trundle. And trundle we do around a short track to a holding area which signifies that

the Harrier is airborne and on its sortie.

And there we wait until we're ushered in to land. This bit isn't quite as realistic as the 'take-off'. There's no 'sideways slide', no drop to the deck, no bounce of the undercarriage as the Harrier touches down.

No, it's a bit more trundling – with all the requisite signals from the handlers – and then a slicing motion across the neck. *Cut the engine*.

Now you could do all this on a simulator (and a lot of it is – see later).

There's a 'but' coming...

"You don't get the heat, the noise, the smell of the exhaust fumes, that burning sensation in your eyes.

– Eggy Eggleston

"You get the real thing here – the heat, the noise, the smell of the exhaust fumes, that burning sensation in your eyes," says Eggy. "You get the real thing here – that's why it's a cracking piece of kit, so realistic."

"It makes people realise that a flight deck is bloody dangerous – but if you make a mistake here, all you do is run on to some grass."

THE dummy deck is the jewel in the crown of the School of Flight Deck Operations. But it's not the only gem – and shunting Harriers, Merlins and Sea Kings around a mock deck barely scratches the surface of the school's output.

No, another vital nugget lies half a dozen miles to the south at Predannack, Cudrose's satellite airfield.

As important as guiding

aircraft safely on and off a flight deck is, only about half an aircraft handler's six-month course is spent dealing with, er, handling aircraft.

The rest is devoted to emergency rescue and fire-fighting – and at wind-swept Predannack there's a 120-acre site to play with.

A dozen or so 'dead ducks' are scattered around the satellite airfield for crash teams to practise extricating Fred, the Royal Navy's calamity-prone dummy.

Any one who's had the 'pleasure' of pulling Fred out of the drink will know he's a heavy and unwieldy chap.

Now try freeing him from the smoke-filled cockpit of a Canberra bomber where there's very little 'wriggle room' with which to play.

"It's real grit training – or sweat and snot as I prefer to call it," says Lt Cdr Simon Dunkley, the school's Commanding Officer.

There's no fire on the dead ducks: believe it or not unwanted airframes are hard to come by.

But there's plenty of fire a few yards away at three fire-fighting trainers – one mock-up of a propeller-driven aircraft (the 'wide-body trainer'), another of a helicopter fuselage, and finally a tangled mass of metal. The first two are gas-powered, the last devours Avcat.

The gas trainers are easily

turn off and onable: the scale

of the fire can be controlled, as can its location on the mock fuselages. You want a wheel fire? No problem. Just the port engine? Piece of cake. Or you can have Dante's inferno.

Another press of a button and the flames die – providing the fire crews are dealing with the blaze properly. If not, the gas – and flames – keep coming.

You cannot, of course, turn off a real fire. So a few yards away there's a tangled lump of metal which is turned into a raging conflagration courtesy of fuel, gas.

No two ways about it, it's more authentic. The gas-powered blaze gives you flames and heat, but it doesn't give you smoke. Set Avcat alight and pungent black smoke rolls across the airfield; it's visible from a mile away.

It's good for training. It's not so good for the environment – Predannack is a Site of Special Scientific Interest – so the fuel fire is used sparingly (and the school's 'carbon footprint' is offset before the green lobby start any finger-pointing).

"This is pretty much how the real thing is," explains WO(AH) Bob Holborn, the school's fire training officer.

"The only major difference is that a real fire incident is much more protracted – it can drag on for four or five hours.

"As long as the guys use the right techniques, ask the right questions, think about contacting the correct authorities, that's what we're looking for."

There is no substitute for fire-fighting than real flames (although trainees also spend time in the laboratories of the

■ Continued on page 18

● Fire by night... (above) the gas-fuelled fire-fighting trainer at Predannack burns furiously in the dark while (below) Fred is hauled to safety





● The dummy deck through the ages... the first four images show the angled deck, complete with Gannets, Sea Hawks, Sea Vixens, the prototype Harrier P1127, and former Red Arrows Gnats; the last image shows the post-1988 layout of the deck

■ Continued from page 17

local college to learn about the science of fire).

"Look at the faces of the students when they see it for the first time," says Lt Cdr Dunkley. "That shows the need for this type of training."

TRAINNEES spend a good six to nine days at Predannack – but the inferno doesn't end there.

For back at Culdrose there's a two-storey 'fire house' (it looks like a couple of portable cabins stacked on top of each other; it's actually a state-of-the-art purpose-built fire trainer).

Like Predannack trainers, it's largely gas-powered, except that it simulates fighting fires in a house.

Now why do we train RN fire-fighters to tackle house fires you might ask? Well, there are no full-time fire-fighters in Helston, just retained crews.

If there's a blaze in the offices or accommodation at Culdrose – entirely possible given the size of the establishment and number of inhabitants/employees – it's the on-site fire crews who are expected to respond first, before the civvies take over when they arrive.

A hand-held control panel dictates the strength of fire. A press of another button and there are "dancing angels" on the ceiling – a flash over.

It's a rather surreal experience to watch flames safely racing above your head, hauntingly beautiful...

"All that's out the window in a house: you don't know the number of occupants.

"You don't know what to expect. Children have a habit of hiding in cupboards and closets in the event of fire.

"On a ship, you're thinking about salvage – saving the kit, saving the compartment, saving the ship. In a house, it's about saving people, but also about protecting their possessions."

Donning PBI Gold suits – identical to those worn by civilian fire-fighters – today are trainee aircraft handlers Wilson Tulakepa and Catherine Fraser.

"We thought we'd only be fighting fires in a ship," says Catherine. "You realise that fighting a fire in a house really is much more confined."

The Senior Service has similar facilities at Havoc and Phoenix at Raleigh and Excellent respectively, but they replicate fighting blazes on a ship; what we have at Culdrose,

the domestic fire training unit, is unique. There are important differences between the two.

"On a ship, you know how many people there are, you know exactly what to find entering a compartment," Jan explains.

"All that's out the window in a house: you don't know the number of occupants.

"You don't know what to expect. Children have a habit of hiding in cupboards and closets in the event of fire.

Well, actually... The branch comprises the RN's cadre of professional drivers – which explains why the school is also responsible for driver training.

It dates back to the days when aircraft handlers for all naval air stations received instruction in driving fire engines.

It's a skill still taught, of course, but the number of airbases has reduced drastically. Instead other driving instruction has supplanted the original training.

Around 600 sailors and marines personnel pass through the motor transport training section every year – medics, Commando Logistic Regiment personnel, bomb disposal teams, Commando Helicopter Force staff who drive hazardous materials around, fork lift truck operators, but not, oddly, the sailors who use the tractors on carrier flight decks.

There are things you can do on a simulator which you wouldn't want to replicate in real life.

Take the emergency low-visibility approach – a helicopter trying to find a fog-bound ship.

Around half the trainees are flight deck crews of frigates and destroyers – men and women who have other day jobs.

On top of that there are RFA sailors; rarely does an auxiliary deploy these days without a flight.

RAF personnel and soldiers also pass through here before working with the RN (e.g. the Army Air Corps Apaches which exercised with HMS Ocean last autumn).

The deck handlers have a rig to 'play' with – a moveable gantry which replicates the stern superstructure of a Type 23 with the relevant lighting, plus a helicopter to help them practise.

But what's really impressive is the flight deck simulator, squirrelled away in an otherwise typically-ordinary building on the edge of the airfield.

"There is nothing like being at sea in the wind and rain, but for what it does, for value for money – we've saved a lot of time in aircraft hours – it's fantastic," says CPO Lewis.

"We get the weather we want, we get the aircraft we want. And I enjoy playing with it..."

It is this element of the training offered by the school which led to a name change in the mid-90s.

For nearly half a century before that, it was the School of Aircraft Handling (as still reflected in

deck officers are expected to guide safely down).

Day or night, calm seas or foul, Apache or Merlin, the computer system can do it all (and more).

As he or she would do in real life, the trainee FDO stands on the 'deck' and makes the relevant signals to the aircraft and to their computer-generated handlers (or for a Type 45 there's a small windowed compartment with touch-screen controls – flight deck officers in the new destroyers are shielded from the elements). It's accompanied by authentic stereo sound.

Watching it all is CPO Andy

Lewis who 'flies' the helicopter

with a video

games pad,

reacting to the

gestures made

by the trainee.

There are

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bomb disposal teams, Commando

Helicopter Force staff who drive

hazardous materials around, fork

lift truck operators, but not, oddly,

the sailors who use the tractors on

carrier flight decks.

Before we get too sidetracked

by aircraft handlers, a statistic:

there are 1,300 students passing

through the school each year.

Only one in every 13 is an aircraft

handler.

Around half the trainees are

flight deck crews of frigates and

destroyers – men and women who

have other day jobs.

On top of that there are RFA

sailors; rarely does an auxiliary

deploy these days without a flight.

RAF personnel and soldiers also

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But what's really impressive

is the flight deck simulator,

squirrelled away in an otherwise

typically-ordinary building on

the edge of the airfield.

Two years of programming have

gone into the simulator – a huge

three-screen affair which simulates

every RN ship type with a flight

deck, plus every helicopter flight

deck officers are expected to guide

safely down.

Day or night, calm seas or foul,

Apache or Merlin, the computer

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As he or she would do in real

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elements).

It was refitted in the mid-80s to

take into account the demise of the

traditional flat-tops and the arrival

of the Harrier carriers.

Another refit is looming.

its badge and motto, nostris in manibus tuti – safe in our hands).

It began life at Fort Rowner (later HMS Siskin) in Gosport before heading west to Culdrose in 1959.

Back then we had fleet carriers – with a dummy angled flight deck to match. A mish mash of Sea Hawks, Gannets, Scimitars, Sea Vixens, Hunters, Jet Provosts, Phantoms, and Buccaneers provided the training.

It was refitted in the mid-80s to take into account the demise of the traditional flat-tops and the arrival of the Harrier carriers.

Another refit is looming.

"We've done a lot of work already looking at training handlers for the Queen Elizabeth class," says Lt Cdr Dunkley.

The Invincibles can carry up to two dozen aircraft, their successors twice as many – on a flight deck three times the size.

A mock-up deck would fit (just) on the existing dummy deck site although the R01 'superstructure' which has stood for decades (it serves as a vantage point for instructors to assess handlers' performance) would have to be pulled down and replaced with something resembling the twin islands of the future carriers.

It'll be a few years before they need to rebuild the site, and as for aircraft, well there are enough Harrier spares to keep them taxiable for another quarter of a century.

And when they do, not much will change. It'll be bigger, yes, of course. But instructors will be looking for what they've always sought from their handlers.

"What makes a good aircraft handler?" Lt Cdr Dunkley asks himself. "Professional knowledge, airmanship, physical – and mental – fitness, leadership and confidence in your own ability.

"The biggest danger on a flight deck is complacency."

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● Computer wizard in charge of Merlin... CPO Andy Lewis sets a helicopter down on the new Flight Deck Officer's simulator

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**Description**

Builders BAE Systems Submarine Solutions and the Royal Navy are delighted to present this well-appointed nuclear-powered submarine now based in a picturesque loch-side location in Western Scotland. The asset boasts many traditional features of submarines, but also benefits from recent technological advances. No garden. Viewing opportunities are rare.

Passageways

HMS Astute benefits from (relatively) spacious passageways, such as that on 2 Deck (right).

At 7,400 tonnes, the submarine is half as big again as the Trafalgar class boats which she and her sisters were designed to replace, yet she has a complement around 25 per cent less than the T-boats.

Under normal conditions crew members will appreciate the greater amount of room, although when carrying a full load of contractors, or storing ship, it still all feels just a little snug.

**Galley**

Astute benefits from a spacious galley (right) which should keep the chefs (or logisticians (catering services (preparation))) happy (right, again).

And if the chefs are happy, the ship's company are happy.

A typical ten-week patrol would see the crew of Astute get through an average of 18,000 sausages and 4,200 Weetabix for breakfast, and it is the storage space for food which limits the extent of a patrol.

Fresh food can be eked out over about a month, after that the tinned and frozen food comes into its own.

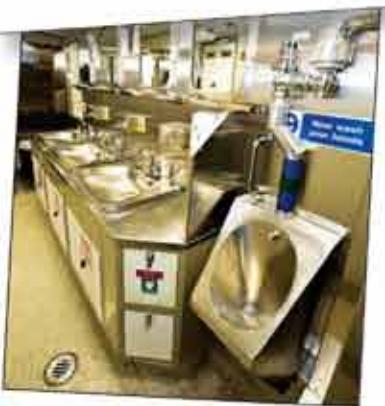
**Lounge/Dining Room**

Communal areas such as the Senior Rates' mess (left) benefit from the more practical design aspects of the boat in relation to such facilities as the galley and pantries.

There is more room for entertainment such as games consoles and wide screen TVs.



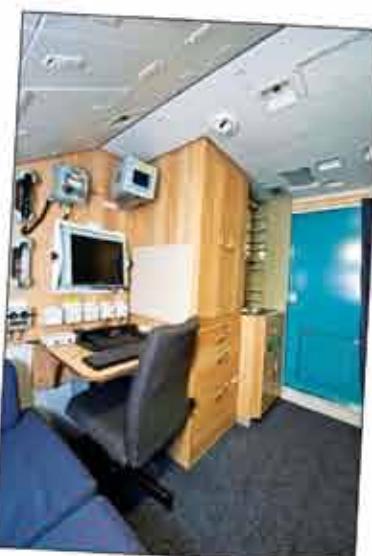
HMS Astute details....1

**Bathrooms**

The bathrooms (or heads, if you prefer) on board Astute (left) and her sisters are less of a squeeze than in previous classes – but bijou is still probably the kindest term for them.

No gas boilers in sight here – these bathrooms are provided with running hot and cold water by the nuclear reactor, which creates the power (and heat) for the boat to manufacture and warm up water.

Astute's sanitary fittings comprise five showers, five toilets, two urinals and eight hand basins for a crew of 98 – the Commanding Officer has his own hand basin.

**The Master Bedroom**

Actually the Captain's cabin, boasting a little more space than the senior and junior rates but still not quite sufficient to swing a cat, should the need arise.

Astute's CO, Cdr Andy Coles, joined the Navy 30 years ago as a junior rating, serving as a radio operator in HMS Invincible before training as an officer in 1984.

Cdr Coles served in HM submarines Splendid, Osiris and Talent before teaching new officers at the RN's submarine school.

He was then appointed Executive Officer of ballistic missile submarine HMS Victorious, and later took command of HMS Turbulent from 2003-06, when the T-boat undertook a round-the-world deployment.

Cdr Coles was appointed OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 2005.

**Bedrooms**

There is a bed for everybody on board and a handful of bunks to spare – a rare thing indeed in the Silent Service.

Deeps moving on board Astute while in Barrow also noticed a little more storage space for their personal belongings.

But there will still be the need for the extra bed spaces in the Weapon Stowage and Handling compartment, particularly as Astute undertakes some 18 months of sea trials with her RN crew augmented by 30 or more contractors and training staff.

They will be spending their nights on the racks normally used by the boat's automated weapon handling system to deal with the 38 Spearfish torpedoes and Tomahawk cruise missiles carried on board – more than any previous RN submarine.

● HMS Astute arrives on the Clyde during her maiden voyage from Barrow

Well-app



● HMS Astute makes her way up the Clyde for her first visit to her home port

Clyde pictures: LA (Phot) JJ Massey



HMS Astute details....2

pointed, with great potential

KIPPERS and custard. Foxes and chickens.

Some things just do not sit comfortably together.

So how about a nuclear power plant and high explosives?

Weld them all together, then stick the result several hundred feet deep, at huge pressure (the equivalent of 400 family saloon cars pressing down on every square metre of pressure hull), in a hostile, corrosive liquid.

Move the whole thing around at high speed.

And just to make it that much more of a challenge, build it using more than a million components yet make it so quiet you would hardly know it is there.

That, in a nutshell, is HMS Astute.

She may be later than originally planned, and she may cost more than originally planned.

But she is an astounding piece of engineering, and easily the most powerful and capable attack submarine the Royal Navy has ever possessed.

John Hudson, managing director of BAE Systems Submarine Solutions, pointed out that the last HMS Astute, an Amphion-class boat, had been built at Barrow in 1944, and the depths of the day would be astonished by the advances between their Astute and the new version.

The challenges in building the new class of hunter-killer – originally a description of their intended role in seeking out and destroying enemy ballistic missile boats – were considerable.

Her compact nuclear reactor, not much bigger than a domestic dustbin, will supply all power requirements for the boat's 25-year life without the need to refuel, and is much more responsive to power output requirements than

previous reactors.

Around 100 sailors live in close proximity to the reactor and weapons; some of the operating positions are just three or four metres from the reactor core

– although British nuclear submariners are generally found to have been exposed to less radiation than members of the public because the background radiation from environmental sources, including minerals and the sun's rays, do not affect those on board.

We said earlier that Astute is the latest hunter-killer, but versatility is the byword of the modern Fleet submarine, as explored by the current S- and T-boats.

Mr Hudson said a lot of effort had gone into the art of stealth – true stealth, not the hokum they spin about stealth aircraft.

Because a stealth bomber might sneak past radar but they – and their vapour trails – are visible in the sky; a submarine can hang around, fulfil a mission and slip away without anyone knowing where, when or even if anything was there at all.

"It is a quantum leap in capability over the T-class," said Mr Hudson.

Which makes the class a very potent surveillance tool, gathering data on people, ships and places in total anonymity – useful skills in countering terrorism and piracy as well as undertaking more conventional tasks.

● On this page, clockwise from right: Astute-class boats 2 and 3 – Ambush (right of picture) and Artful – take shape in the Devonshire Dock Hall of the BAE Systems Submarine Solutions shipyard in Barrow; HMS Astute is gently ushered alongside at Clyde Naval Base; the crew of HMS Astute line up for the camera shortly before the submarine made her first foray out to sea on her way north to the Clyde



And not only is Astute very quiet, but she is also strong enough and flexible enough to deal with the underwater shocks associated with subsurface warfare.

And in terms of clout the submarine is again a step forward from her predecessors; she carries more torpedoes and tube-launched missiles

than any other class, which includes the Spearfish heavyweight torpedo and Tomahawk cruise missiles.

Astute's keel was laid in 2001, and the spin-off from such a build programme is sub-contracts and jobs, with around 50 per cent of the cost of the boat going on materials.

In 2008 alone the Astute spent on material was £215 million from 410 suppliers across the UK.

Around 5,000 people were actually involved in building Astute, many from Barrow, and the programme continues to support British industry; Boats 2 and 3 (Ambush and Artful) are recognisable in the Devonshire Dock Hall, the keel for Boat 4 (Audacious) has been laid and because of the specialist nature of some equipment and materials, long-lead items for Boat 5 are in the pipeline.

BAE Systems have developed their own techniques throughout the build programme.

One major innovation is the use of modular towers on Boat 3 rather than scaffolding; such



● Cdr Andy Coles, Commanding Officer of HMS Astute

towers have offices, tool lockers and storage space on board, which means managers are there at the sharp end and the workforce do not have to traipse around the hall to retrieve tools and components, saving a great deal of time.

The trials Astute is undergoing at present will prove a number of hypotheses, such as the crucial noise factor; the boat is designed for stealth, and tests so far show that Astute's noise signature conforms closely to the predictions.

Once the moving platform (Astute herself) has been thoroughly proved, she will be tested as a military asset, ensuring she can deliver weapons as required, work with boats and helicopters for casualty evacuations and so on.

"She has been tested as far as she can in Barrow – systems and crew and so on. Now it is time to take her to sea," said Mr Hudson.

Some of her crew have been with her for five years, some for five months, some walked on board just weeks before she sailed north to her home port of Faslane.

That will see her through to 2011, though she is due to commission this spring.

Despite the size of the submarine – almost 50 per cent greater than the T-boats – there is still a need to squeeze a lot of kit into a small space; BAE estimates that a typical nuclear submarine is three times more densely packed with machinery and kit than a surface vessel.

Despite that there are improvements over the Trafalgar-class.

LS(TSM) Rockey McGovern has served on all recent classes of RN nuclear submarines, and pointed out the TV, DVD player and games consoles (with their own TV) in the junior rates' mess.

"We've even got a dishwasher," he said.

"Instead of arguing about who is not washing their dishes, it is who's not emptying the dishwasher..."

LS McGovern said there were still issues about the level of comfort on board, but admitted it was a better billet than the old boats.

Fellow leading hand and sonar specialist Shaun Robinson pointed out that every one of the 100 or so crew on board during a normal patrol would have their own sleeping space – no more 'hot-bunking' where members of different watches use the same bunk at different times.

"It's a bit of a novelty for some lads," said Shaun.

"I have been ten years on submarines, and it will take me

about two weeks to get used to six hours on, six hours off again.

"I am told I am known as Shaun of the Bed because I sleep so well on board."

Astute's Commanding Officer, Cdr Andy Coles, said there were some "amazing new features" on the submarine, one of the main ones being the switch from an ordinary hull-piercing periscope to digital technology.

Optical masts, with smaller profiles than before and incorporating infra-red and low-light features, can capture pictures or video and transmit them to other units or headquarters within seconds.

But now it is a chance for his men to make their mark as the Navy gets to grips with the new boat.

"This can be improved – a submarine first of class is a living, breathing article, and some things can be improved," said Cdr Coles.

"The small things that make operating this submarine better, the things that help the crew to do their jobs.

"We will spot those when the crew is on board and it will be used for other boats and, if necessary, retrofitted here."

Other features include a communications fit which allows members of the command team wherever they are on the boat, to be contacted through earpieces instead of having to pipe.

The Navy can hardly wait to put the boat on the front line.

"Astute is a great piece of kit – we are very proud of it," said Rear Admiral Simon Lister, Director of Submarines.





Pictures: LA(Phot) Gary Weatherston

It's a small world

THE NAVY is keen to boost the profile of small ships and the important work that they do around the globe. But let's be honest, they do have a certain reputation with regard to living conditions – the cramped accommodation, the busy duties, the sea swell...

But if you talk to the men of HMS Penzance all these negatives are very much positives of life in the small ship world (well, except for the seasickness, but a tale is told of a lad who has been sick every day for two months but still loves it on board the minehunter).

Admittedly for many of the men aboard Penzance it is her homeport in among the Scottish lochs which is the particular draw, but ventures onto the larger ships of the Navy have been quickly regretted.

PO Brian 'Cash' Cashman (pictured left) is Penzance's Ops Room supervisor; he admits: "At one point I wanted to transfer, and I did a week on a big ship. I noticed the different atmosphere from the first day.

"It's not a case of micro-

managing, but there's no trust. On small ships there has to be an element of trust and personal responsibility.

"It's the whole reason I didn't go into a different branch. It would almost have been like dropping a rate.

"If you want to have that responsibility you can thrive on small ships."

CPO Grant 'Tug' Wilson, the ship's DMO, grins: "I've been on carriers, where the sections are maybe 20 people. When not doing our job, all the young lads were doing is cleaning.

"There's a lot more job satisfaction on these. You get given a lot more freedom.

"We mix a lot more with other people. We bump into the captain every day; on a carrier we might see him once a week."

The small ships are carrying out a heavy tasking in the Gulf, with four MCM ships out there and the crews regularly rotating through.

But this is not viewed as the

problem that you might expect.

Cash said: "With what's happening in the Gulf, you are nearly guaranteed that you will be at sea for six months.

"It's a good savings scheme."

The small ships also manage to sneak into those ports that their bigger sisters can only admire from a distance. "We get to see places that you will never ever see in big ships," said Tug.

Cash agrees: "And when you get a run ashore we can get to places big ships can't get into. When we visited Liverpool we went right into the Albert Dock.

"We went to Kinlochbervie, and there is absolutely nothing there. But it was a fantastic run ashore, the locals took us in hand and looked after us. We just wouldn't get that in a big ship."

The junior rates on board echo the sentiment.

Chef Logs(CS) 'Bugsy' Malone (pictured right) has had

plenty of experience outside the small ship world. "I've been on the same big ship for eight years.

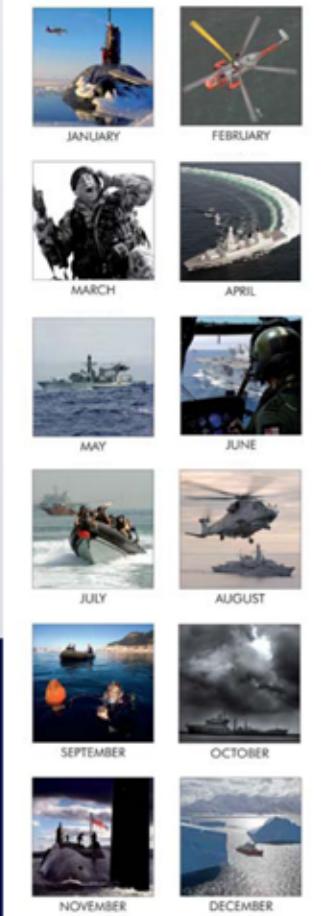
"I asked to come up here, it's closer to home. I don't find it very different cooking-wise. Just cooking for fewer people. But I know everybody on here. Plus I get to do other things as well."

Another man who jumped ship to the 'Tupperware fleet' is AB(CS) Jonny McNeill, who said: "I wanted to be closer to home. I knew it was going to be busier. But I enjoy that.

"It's close knit on here. You know everybody. On a big ship you only really know your department. The other side of the ship – you might never see them."

As befits his branch, LS(MW) Tom Glancy said: "I've always been in this small ship community. I wouldn't want to go to a big ship – never. Never.

"When I joined the Navy, I said I wanted to go to Faslane. So I was told it's either submarines or minewarfare. So I chose this. And I don't regret it. I enjoy my job."



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● The view from Flyco in the new Queen Elizabeth-class carriers, as seen in the Mission System Integration Facility at Portsdown Technology Park



Long walk into the future

FLYCO on the new Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers has an interesting addition for now – a sin-bin.

Anyone wishing to walk to the ops room or other vital hubs of activity are required to sit in the sin-bin for ten or twenty minutes before they carry out their duty.

It's not a punishment, rather a rudimentary (but very effective) way to illustrate a point about the new ships to those working on simulators.

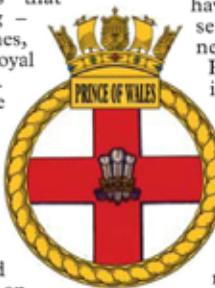
And that point is that they are big. Very big – at around 65,000 tonnes, the biggest ships the Royal Navy has ever operated.

The simulations are being run by BAE Systems on Portsdown Hill, overlooking Portsmouth Harbour, and although there are attempts to make it all as realistic as possible – a large curved screen shows activity on the flight deck, for example – there are aspects which defy computer-driven make-believe.

In the Portsdown Technology Park version of the carriers, Flyco – Flying Control or, in simple terms, the ship's control tower – is in the room next door to the 'Ops Room', separated by just a curtain.

It would be all too easy to poke your head round the curtain and resolve an issue, but for the sake of authenticity the communication must be by phone or email.

If an individual wants to



physically move between the two, or to another part of the imaginary ship, he or she must pass the appropriate transit time in the sin-bin.

It's not nit-picking, there is some very sound reasoning behind it – the need for integrated technology to match up with integrated operations at all levels.

Take something as simple as a message to the chefs, or rather logisticians (catering services (preparation)), to tell them that a meal is required for aviators at a certain time.

It could take 15 minutes for a sailor to deliver a note, in which time the mission may have changed and a new set of meal arrangements needed.

How much better would it be to have a system which allowed the chefs (logisticians etc (etc)) to log in and pick up the latest information they need.

The same principle applies to the more directly-operational mission support services such as aircraft refuelling or weapons delivery and loading schedules.

This level of integration will start even before these hugely complex ships set sail.

Plugging into the MOD Defence Infrastructure (DII) when alongside, the ship's team will be able to co-ordinate the routine work of ordering stores, ammunition and the like.

Pay and personnel details, assignment orders, health and dental records and dental records, including electronic updates from work carried out on the ship, will

● An impression of the flight deck of the new Queen Elizabeth-class carriers

Pictures: BAE Systems



all be connected to the relevant systems ashore – there are plenty of areas where integration can make life easier and more efficient.

But back to the war game.

The scenario for this series of simulations, Exercise Northern Thistle, is a territorial conflict between those warring neighbours Dragonia and Caledonia, part of the Wallian Archipelago.

It all looks remarkably like Great Britain, thereby allowing boffins to use computer data on familiar exercise areas around the UK coast, but in this scenario the Royal Navy's political masters operate from Diego Garcia, thousands of miles away, to give

everyone room to play while tackling additional problems such as long logistics chains.

The UK task force, of which this carrier is flagship, must carry out a range of missions to test the so-called C4I dimension – Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence.

It is a chance to ensure some of the most vital parts of the carrier work and work together before additional factors are loaded in.

Those factors will soon include network links with the United States (indeed, a live test link was already in place for this event), and sensor data or information from other training centres or real ships may be added in.

"This synthetic environment allows us to generate scenarios that recreate realistic ship-board operations and combat activity," said Cdr Owen McDermott, Mission System Lead with the QE MOD team.

"These can then be used to create operator-stressing situations and thereby explore the effectiveness of the interactions between ship and air support groups and operations staff.

"Although synthetic, it provides a very realistic environment for the test operators."

This phase of trials was particularly focussed on mission support and flight scheduling applications, ensuring that fledgling systems in both the carrier and the Joint Combat Aircraft can work together.

Everything is as realistic as possible so as to draw in participants – in this case, ship's company from HMS Illustrious who could be spared from their ship.

Poor weather is thrown in, forcing the task group to reposition itself hundreds of miles away, and sorties have to be replanned.

Such exercises embrace a wide range of groups, all keen to ensure that key risk areas are thoroughly explored and tested to ensure that there are no shocks later down the line – the 'de-risking' process.

Or as one manager put it, "plenty of wonders but no surprises."

Northern Thistle will shine a light into such areas as communications message handling and integration, aircraft logistics management, full mission planning and execution, and aircraft control via voice and data link circuits.

In the coming months, as contracts are signed and the carriers start taking shape in the real world, further emulations will use ship fit equipment to test the actual hardware that will go into the ships.

Training for the ship's company thus becomes more and more realistic.

The Queen Elizabeth-class mission system will be a complex agglomeration of 60 sub-systems, made up of around 14,000 individual elements connected by 1,740km of fibre-optic cable.

The mission system team have the direct lead for more than 100 operational spaces, but with the range of mission,

sensor, communications and ship administration systems they impact on practically every ship compartment.

Future end-users will get plenty of opportunity to see and feel how the various parts of the mission system handle, a far easier approach than working through hundreds of pages of a technical manual.

They will be expected to make pertinent observations if something does not seem right.

One such example came when a laconic senior rate, sitting at a keyboard designed to cope with anti-flash gear and the full size range of potential operators, observed: "These buttons are too bloody small."

Something for the mission system team to look at – but better to tweak it now than rip it out and replace it when the good ship HMS Queen Elizabeth is on shake-down trials.

Work on the ships themselves continues – recent sub-contracts include Score Marine, of Peterhead, supplying more than 12,000 valves for each ship, Babcock Strachan and Henshaw in Bristol will supply the integrated waste management system, the communications systems from Thales Ltd in Crawley, fire doors and hatches from MST Ltd in Cheshire, lighting from McGeoch Ltd in Birmingham and laundry equipment from Kemsafe in Southampton.

Humans are third dimension

PORSDOWN Technology Park is the site of the Queen Elizabeth-class Mission System Integration Facility, which offers technicians a range of Visualisation and Experimentation (V and E) activities.

This allows all parties to get their hands on the kit and test it as it should be tested – in realistic scenarios where sailors and air crew can see how the new kit helps them carry out well-honed professional military skills.

It's a strange mix of past, present and future.

A group of visitors stands in the fake Flyco watching a serving officer handle aircraft of the future on the flight deck of a ship not yet built.

The software which helps him is already being adapted for possible use on current ships, but as he talks to visiting journalists he is interrupted by a pipe which requests all staff and visitors to observe two minutes' silence for those who died

in past and present conflicts.

Activity on the imaginary flight deck pauses, then military and commercial staff continue to test the system to iron out any glitches before highly-skilled sailors use it for real.

The V and E principle marries gaming technology and powerful processors to the types of wooden mock-ups familiar from past classes of ships.

But it is the human dimension which drives the V and E programme, translating the imaginary two-dimensional design from the computer screen to three-dimensional life and identifying problems in a relatively low-cost, effective way.

"The carriers are not just iconic vessels, but they also need bright people," said Tony Graham, Head of the Capital Ships at the MOD.

"We will need to find the graduate sailors of the future to operate ships of this scale."

Festival p

WHEN operating warships thousands of miles from home you sometimes need a friendly shore.

For the various ships operating in the Gulf, that friendly shore (or port, to be more accurate) has often been in Kuwait.

So in order to demonstrate the UK's and Royal Navy's appreciation for the host nation and security support, a 'Thank You Kuwait' festival was staged, hosted by the UK Maritime Component Commander Bahrain and the British Embassy.

Among the ships drafted in to play their part were Type 23 frigate HMS Monmouth, Hunt-class minehunters HMS Atherstone and Chiddingfold and landing ship RFA Lyme Bay.

Beginning with an 'operational capability demonstration' for a number of distinguished guests, including the Ambassador to Kuwait, Michael Aron, and the Commander Kuwait Navy, Maj Gen Ahmed Yousef Al Mulla, Monmouth conducted a set of formation manoeuvres with the two minehunters, Lyme Bay and Kuwaiti Super Puma, Apache, and F/A18 aircraft.

In the evening the Black Duke and embassy staff co-hosted a reception onboard the frigate for Kuwaiti dignitaries and VIPs.

To emphasise the importance of joint operations, the festival was concluded with a formal lunch at the UK Embassy, which Monmouth provided six hosts and a ceremonial guard.

During this lunch, guests were able to witness a formation sail past for which the UK flotilla was joined by two ships from the Kuwaiti Coast Guard and four from the Kuwaiti Navy – more about that later.

The event also offered the Navy the chance to thank the ex-pat community who continue to support UK armed forces in this strategically-important region.

On her final day alongside, Monmouth played host to 11 schoolchildren, teachers and parents, taking them on tours around the ship, entertaining them and then giving them a bite to eat.

This was in honour of a promise made to the children during a formal ball which raised more than £2,000 for the Help for Heroes charity.

Since the Black Duke left UK waters at the end of September she has participated in three operations – Active Endeavour, Calash and Telic – covering more than 7,000 nautical miles.

She has also visited Gibraltar, Alexandria, Bahrain, Kuwait City and Abu Dhabi along the way.

For the latest leg of her six-month deployment Monmouth has joined Combined Task Force Iraqi Maritime in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

She will be the lead frigate protecting two Iraqi oil platforms, Khawr Al Amaya terminal or KAAOT and Al Basra.

UK and US are an ITAM again

AFTER a gap of almost four months, around 75 UK sailors, Royal Marines and soldiers rejoined American colleagues in the Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission – Navy (ITAM-N) based at Umm Qasr in Southern Iraq.

The coalition team, part of the multi-national Security Transition Command Iraq, train, advise and mentor their Iraqi navy and marine counterparts as part of the security transition mission.

The Commanding Officer of the ITAM-N team, Capt Jamie McMichael-Phillip, returned to Iraq in early November in advance of the others.

He said: "Recent months have been frustrating both for my Royal Navy team, who were mostly back in the UK, and also for our colleagues from the US Navy in Iraq, along with marines and

coast guard who have remained in Umm Qasr to drive forward the good work.

"I am delighted that the Iraqi Government has invited the UK to return, and I know my team are pleased to be back."

He added: "The training, advisory and mentoring task is a tremendous challenge both my UK and US colleagues are prepared for.

"Our coalition predecessors, who have been here since 2004, have done much groundwork and we now have to build on that to ensure that we assist the Iraqi Navy in building their capability as a security force for good."

In conjunction with the coalition, the Iraqi naval service, which covers both sailors and marines, has taken on the role of protecting the two oil platforms in the Northern Arabian Gulf, as well as wider defence of its territorial waters.

The Iraqis have just taken delivery of two new Italian-built patrol ships to bolster their fleet.

Two further patrol ships will follow, as well as a number of patrol boats from the Americans.

• Clockwise from top right: HMS Monmouth takes part in the 'Thank You Kuwait' festival; Atherstone refuels from the American ship Shalal during Exercise Shalom; RFA Lyme Bay and HMS Chiddingfold during the precision Offshore Patrol exercise; Monmouth lives up to her nickname – the Black Duke – during a Royal Marines boarding party; Monmouth in the Gulf of Aden; Monmouth carries out a night exercise using Paralume flares. PO Dave Copeland and LS Jonny Hinchcliffe conduct gun and Minigun, using a nine-strong team of aimers.

Pictures: LA(Phot) Stuart Hill



provides welcome break

Oil Terminal or ABOT, initially under the command of Cdr James Morse, and from last month Cdr Chris Richards.

The security of these two platforms, several miles off the Iraqi coast and which generate a significant proportion of Iraq's income, is crucial to stability in the region.

Monmouth will be the first Type 23 since HMS Richmond in May 2009 to operate in this area.

She will also seek to contribute more broadly to stability in the Gulf by offering training opportunities with the Iraqi Navy and with other coalition forces in the area.

Commanding Officer Cdr Tony Long said: "HMS Monmouth will add a great deal of value to the Maritime Security Operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

"The Royal Navy trains its sailors and Royal Marines well and, as a result, the Black Duke is motivated and equipped to contribute to the continued security in the region."

Monmouth will remain on duty in the Arabian Gulf until the spring.

On page 9 we looked at a busy day in the life of HMS Atherstone.

She and Chiddington returned to their Forward Operating Base (FOB), Bahrain, after a hectic and varied programme keeping her at sea for weeks.

The two Hunts had headed north to conduct training serials in the North Arabian Gulf.

That meant the usual routine at sea whilst deployed of defence watches, where the ship's company work for seven hours, before taking seven hours off to sleep, then work for five hours before taking five hours off to sort out personal administration, do physical training and so on.

It's a tried and tested routine but it does take its toll – and has the distinct disadvantage of making one day feel like two.

This routine was broken up by the Thank You Kuwait ceremony.

From the Hunts' perspective, the three-day event started with a training session with so many VIPs watching the high-profile event, no one wanted to make any mistakes.

That meant numerous evolutions that the ships seldom get the opportunity to practise, such as Officer of the Watch manoeuvres, where a number of ships manoeuvre around one another in close quarters.

Kuwaiti Special Forces were also winched on to the Royal Navy vessels from helicopters so that the VIPs, on the big day, would be able to enjoy a grandstand view of a wide range of military skills from their vantage point on board HMS Monmouth.

Day two involved just the British units as

the VIPs were picked up by Monmouth's Merlin helicopter so they could watch the Special Forces teams winch on to Atherstone and Chiddington simultaneously.

A further team of Special Forces personnel was winched on to Lyme Bay.

There were then two fly-pasts.

The first featured a pair of Apache gunship helicopters, the second two F/A18 fighter jets.

Atherstone and Chiddington then sailed into Kuwait harbour in formation to prepare for the following day.

The final day saw the pair sail out into a hazy, overcast day, to be met by the six awaiting Kuwaiti fast patrol craft, Lyme Bay and Monmouth, making an impressive spectacle.

The minehunters manoeuvred into place either side of the stern of Lyme Bay with the Kuwaitis in two groups, each line astern of the Hunts.

Monmouth brought up rear-and-centre. In this formation the Anglo-Kuwaiti flotilla steamed past the British Embassy, which has direct views over the waterway.

Planning is everything – the weather cleared right on schedule, and the sail past by ten ships, accompanied by a fly past of four Hornets, made for good viewing from the shore as well as the VIPs' ship.

The flotilla then closed each other from the initial 500 yards to 200 yards and steamed into a V formation to allow photographs of the fleet to be taken from a helicopter circling overhead.

Job done, the flotilla dispersed, with Atherstone and Chiddington heading back south to Bahrain.

On arrival Atherstone, with plenty of sea time behind her in recent months, entered a period of maintenance and upkeep.

Lyme Bay is also back on task, her primary role being the support of all the Navy's minehunters in the region.

That leaves three other semi-permanent members of the Navy's Gulf flotilla to catch up with.

A freshly-painted HMS Pembroke went back to sea in late November following a four-week shore support period in Bahrain, when

an inventory of detailed engineering and general maintenance items were tackled.

That also gave the ship's company a break; some met families and friends who had flown out for a spot of sunshine, others undertook a sport diving course while some just chilled out ashore.

Lyme Bay's sister RFA Cardigan Bay is back supporting Iraqi Navy training after a port visit to Bahrain last month.

While there she hosted a visit by Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral Sir Trevor Soar, who was in the region to meet the various ship's companies.

And finally, Pembroke's sister Sandown-class ship HMS Grimsby has been conducting Seafox trials out in the waters of the Arabian Gulf.

In the process, MCM1 Crew 8 became the first Sandown-class team to detonate the Navy's new mine disposal system.

Crew 8 is due to return to Faslane in March, when they will take over HMS Walney ahead of tasks in home waters. Cdr Tim Lowe has handed over responsibility as Commodore Combined Task Force (CTF) 152 to Col Tareq Al Zaabi, of the United Arab Emirates Navy Staff, at a ceremony in Abu Dhabi.





The rowed to nowhere

I JOINED HMS Raleigh 63 years ago to be trained as an ordinary seaman.

With reference to the letter [referring to a photograph we published in July's Photographic Memories from the Imperial War Museum collection showing a land-locked cutter] I can confirm that

I sat in a 32ft cutter with an oar at the ready.

The PO Cox gave the order 'give way together' and there was a scraping of oars on the tarmac. The oars were worn at the ends. I nearly laughed, but was not allowed to!

– K W Evans, ex AB TASOW, Fairbourne, Gwynedd

Cure-all remedy passed its trials

I READ the supplement about HMS Amethyst (August) with great interest as I was involved at the time.

I was called up in June 1956 and went on sea trials on board a ship that was being sold to the Egyptians.

I know that HMS Whimbrel was sold but I am not sure if it was the same ship, as I cannot remember her name.

Camper Nicholson staff were on board and we were worried that having left Portsmouth, our next port of call might be Cairo!

However we returned safely, having reached high speeds which might have caused following ships a problem.

I was issued with a formidable medical steaming trials kit in several large packing cases and told that if I opened any of them, I would have to take a full inventory and be fully responsible for everything.

Fortunately I found a large bottle of aspirins on board and I issued these in great numbers for all conditions, with advice to see their own doctors on return to Egypt. I was able to return the kit unopened.

I would be very interested to know if that ship was Whimbrel or if others were sold as well?

I had heard, whether true or not, that the ship I was on had surrendered to the Israelis at the first sound of gunfire!

I was then posted to HMS Ganges where I met Lt Cdr 'Foxy' Davidson who had been an Engineering Officer on board

Amethyst or Concord.

The film *The Yangtze Incident* was, as you said, made on the Orwell near Ganges and he was asked to play a part, appearing briefly as an Engineering Officer and shouting something like "Hard to port".

He was a great character and I always look forward to hearing and seeing him when the film is shown again.

I would be interested to know which ship I was on for my brief contribution to what was a brief war.

Perhaps one of your readers can help?

– Dr Brian Baker, ex Surg Lt RN, Brighton

...AFTER the end of 1942 an increasing number of escorts, old and new, were being fitted with the Hedgehog (an anti-submarine mortar).

This included a number of sloops – we had one in HMS Magpie, commissioned in 1943.

You will recall that HMS Amethyst and HMS Magpie took the surrender of U-boat 249 on VE Day and escorted her into Weymouth harbour.

Amethyst was commissioned in November 1943 and one's memory does ebb away, but I am fairly certain she had a hedgehog fitted.

– B Haskell-Thomas, Wilton, Wiltshire

opinion

THE ROYAL Navy's role in Afghanistan has been well-documented in *Navy News*, especially in the six months up to April 2009, when the Senior Service provided more than a third of the UK forces deployed to Helmand.

But as one disappointed correspondent points out on this page, other media have not always grasped the extent of the RN's involvement.

The US troop surge of 30,000 announced in December, backed up by another 500 British troops, will once again focus media attention on Afghanistan.

However, as the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, pointed out in his speech at Chatham House, one day the fighting in Afghanistan will be history, and it would be a

Navy's work goes unsung

WHEN IS the Royal Navy Public Relations team going to let the public know of our contribution in Afghanistan?

I have read with utter dismay and disgust Max Hastings' column in the *Daily Mail* (November 24 2009) about how he considers the Royal Navy a non-fighting force, and to use his words "cowardly".

This is regarding the taking of the Chandlers by Somalian pirates.

The public is totally unaware that members of the RN are serving in Afghanistan, I am not referring to the sterling work of the Royal Marines but RN sailors.

I myself deploy next year to Helmand Province at the total bewilderment of my civilian friends. I tell them of the RN officers and ratings there, only to be met by disbelief, they are still not convinced.

I currently work in a tri-service environment and my Army/RAF colleagues are amazed at the lack of publicity there is for our lads/lasses in theatre.

Commercial radio stations quite rightly refer to the brave soldiers and airmen in Afghanistan but fail to mention the RN.

Is it going to take, God forbid, for a sailor to take the sad journey through Wootton Bassett for the public to be made aware?

Until someone gets a grip and promotes the RN contribution, I'm afraid the public view of the RN will be exactly what the responding comments to Max Hastings column on the *Daily Mail* website are saying.

That we are a waste of money and an embarrassment to the Armed Forces and Britain, and in some extreme cases need to be scrapped in total.

We have discussed this today at length, between all ranks and rates, we feel extremely embarrassed and



A £25 Amazon voucher to the letter which amuses, impresses or enlightens us the most.

to the excellent coverage from *Navy News* of the RN efforts in Afghanistan, that a small number of the public even get a whiff of what we do.

● The Duchess of Cornwall presents medals to RN medics returned from Afghanistan

I raised this issue with *Navy News* a couple of years ago in a letter which was shown to a large number of RN officers and rates before it was forwarded, all of whom agreed fully that something needs to be done.

– CPO Jan Pestel, Chicksands, Bedfordshire

It is only due to the excellent coverage from *Navy News* of the RN efforts in Afghanistan, that a small number of the public even get a whiff of what we do.

As a result we have already received a number of queries from deployed personnel who want to know where letters and packages that they are expecting from the families have got to."

"As there is no RM Chaplain currently in Camp Bastion, the message appealing for parcels was probably an old one. Post sent out to personnel no longer on deployment also causes delays.

The best way to support the servicemen and women is to make a donation through SSAFA Forces Help at <https://www.bmycharity.com/V2/welfarefund>. This fund enables commanders on the ground to bid for those items which they judge will have the best impact on morale.

"Other charities providing valued support to the troops can be found on the MOD website at www.mod.uk/publicsupportforourservicepersonnel" – Ed

A STATEMENT by the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel) discouraging the sending of parcels to troops on active service was published in your November issue.

And yet, on the notice board of my local British Legion Club and also in the local Conservative Club is an appeal from the Royal Marines Chaplain, Camp Bastion, asking for parcels.

There is an obvious conflict between these two messages. Could it be that one of these two gentlemen is more concerned with logistics and the other with the welfare of our troops?

– Bob Griffiths, Hon Secretary, RNA Abingdon, Oxon

Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson, DCDS(P), has asked us to point out that while he and everyone in MOD are extremely grateful to those who wish to show their support to the Armed Forces, sending letters and parcels to the front line overloads a stretched mail service.

The Admiral told us: "An analysis of one week's

grave mistake to base our future defence structures on this particular conflict.

We must look beyond Afghanistan to security challenges elsewhere in the world, never forgetting that Britain is an island nation, dependent on global security and the free movement of maritime trade for our stability and prosperity.

As the Admiral said, a single warship can do everything from diplomatic engagement to humanitarian aid to embargo operations to fighting. A balanced maritime force can deliver amphibious forces, carrier strike and cruise missiles.

It is only our versatile maritime forces which give the UK the ability to operate on land, sea and air to defend our interests.

The views expressed in *Navy News* do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Defence

Baby chiefs

ROBERT Frost asked (letters, December) if he would be the youngest Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy in the near future.

I was advanced to CPO and Engine Room Artificer First Class on September 6 1966.

My date of birth is August 22 1943, thus making me 23 years and 15 days when I 'put up my buttons' – several months younger than PO Frost will be even if he is advanced now.

I am sure that I was far from being the youngest, so I am not claiming any records.

– C R Whitehouse, Welshpool, Powys

MY CONGRATULATIONS to Robert Frost, it's quite an achievement in this day and age.

However, I think I can cap his 'bragging rights,' as I put my three buttons up on the 4th of December 1960 at the grand old age of 23 years, two months and two days.

I became Acting local CREA 1962 and Acting CREA on the 4th of December 1963 at the age of 26 years, two months and two days.

However, I only held this rate for 27 days as I was promoted to Acting Electrical Sub Lieutenant SD(R).

I was in the right place at the right time as the branch was expanding due to the Cold War. I don't want to detract from Robert's achievement but I often wondered if I might have been the youngest Chief Artificer and/or Electrical Sub Lieutenant SD as later I became a Weapons Engineer Sub Lieutenant (SD) (RE) when the branch titles changed.

As the junior WEO I became the 'Wee Wee.'

– Terry Barratt, Newbiggin, Penrith

African liberty

I WOULD like to ask if RN personnel and other *Navy News* readers support my proposal to create a Royal Navy memorial to the sailors and Royal Marines who lost their lives in the 19th century campaign to end the slave trade?

More than 16,000 RN personnel died in the campaign. Their contribution was vital.

The memorial could include and represent all those from Africa and Europe who campaigned or fought for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

I suggest it could be situated in Ghana – a stable and democratic country closely associated with the slave trade.

It could be a statue of liberty for Africa and demonstrate to people of all races that although the slave trade was driven by extreme brutality it was also stopped by the courage and conviction of Africans and Europeans who increasingly rose up against the abhorrent trade.

I think the Commonwealth will also be interested in this.

Please could readers visit the Parliamentary site on <http://lordsoftheblog.net/home/page/6/> and give their responses?

– Lord Soley of Hammersmith, House of Lords

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CLASSIC JACK



George, a legend in his own locker

I READ *Heroes of the Royal Navy* no 67 (November) about A B 'George' Parker with interest.

I was First Lieutenant of St Kitts from 1951 to 1953 and thus covered his last two years in that ship.

George was indeed held in high respect and no one dared interfere with his caboose, as you called it. This was at the base of the mast, between the funnel and the break of the foc'sle.

George was a terrible squirrel and the chief boatswain's mate and I were aware that it was full of highly inflammable material.

One day, in Chatham Dockyard, a welder was working under the mast and the heat from the welding set fire to George's precious store.

The biffet took great pleasure in chucking out the entire contents and, henceforth, George was only allowed to keep what he should as the upper-deck lockerman.

George was a quiet, even-tempered man and took all this very well.

It was said that George had a nice wife and grown-up family, but when he went on leave, he used to persuade someone to telephone his home with an immediate recall, so George was never on leave for more than about 48 hours.

In late 1952, St Kitts in the Home Fleet and Camperdown from the Mediterranean Fleet were ordered to exchange ship's companies at Gibraltar.

I was relieved myself at the time and forgot the reason for this, but had it not happened, George

would surely have remained in St Kitts for even longer!

– Cdr G H Greenish (Ret'd)
Robertsbridge,
East Sussex

...AFTER completing my training at HMS Ganges I joined HMS St Kitts in 1957 as a signalman, and of course met George.

The stories of his special relationship with Lord Mountbatten proliferated, as did the ones of him having a telegram sent, recalling him off his leave.

I personally cannot remember this, however I was assured by some of the older hands that it did indeed happen.

What I do recall is on the day of the decommissioning of St Kitts I was the person (along with George) to haul down the commissioning pennant, and was instructed by my Chief Yeoman (presumably on the orders of the captain) to present it to George.

– H McArthur, Batam Island,
Indonesia

...SOME ten years after the destroyer HMS Camperdown was decommissioned, the name was passed to the new shore headquarters for Tay Division RNR in Dundee.

By then the destroyer had been scrapped but we acquired some trivial mementoes, amongst which was a ten-inch brass ball attached to a four-foot long brass spike, allegedly the lightning conductor from the late HMS Camperdown's

mainmast.

The story we got was of a three-badge AB who had served in her, a Ganges boy, whose oppo at Ganges had risen far in the service.

As so often happens, despite the differences in career paths, they kept in touch, but when his oppo reached flag rank, the AB felt that he also wanted to wear a single ball at the mainmast.

With the approval of his CO he fabricated the modified lightning conductor and it remained at HMS Camperdown's masthead until the ship went for scrap.

Part of the deal was that he was responsible for keeping it polished.

It is of stories such as this that a tradition of humour and humility is built in a disciplined service.

I don't know what happened to the trophy (I don't think it was ever registered as such) but I suspect that some RN staff officer in a fit of 'clear-out' consigned it to the bin.

Sadly Tay Division and our HMS Camperdown has gone the way of her predecessor.

– Cdr Mike Dickinson, RNR,
CO HMS Camperdown 1986-91

...THANK YOU for your article. After only recently discussing my grandad with someone, he pops up in your magazine.

I'm sure grandad would have been very proud.

– Stuart Parker, Portsmouth

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information. Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

If you submit a photograph which you did not take yourself, please make sure that you have the permission for us to publish it.



Given the volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News.

We do, however, publish many on our website, www.navynews.co.uk, accompanied by images.

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.



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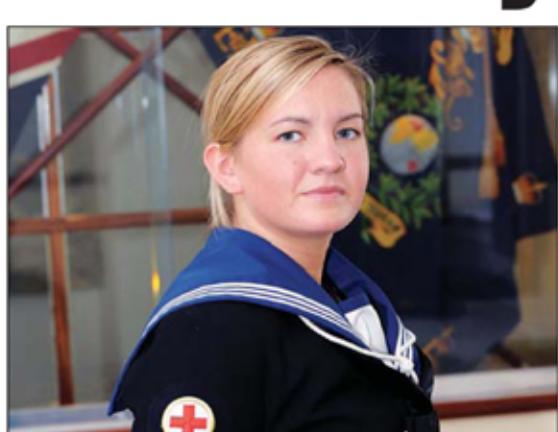
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I AM a retired Chief Petty Officer Medical Assistant awarded the BEM in the 1980s New Year's Honours for hurricane relief in Dominica following Hurricane David.

I was and always will be proud to have served 17 years in the RN, accepting redundancy in 1982.

Heroic actions from such modest individuals as Kate Nesbitt reinforce the pride.

If possible can you publish my heartfelt congratulations, I am so proud of her and the traditions of the medical branch within the RN that she represents.

Bloody well done.

– John Knowles,
CPOMA(Retd),
Police Architectural Liaison Officer,
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary



Sailors in the dark for St Dunstan's



THE CALL has gone out to Service men and women to support the St Dunstan's Forces Challenge, where Naval folk are asked to set themselves a nocturnal or blindfolded challenge to give them a taste of what life is like for the blind.

Some of the first to take up the challenge were a team of 11 from the Defence School of Aeronautical Engineering at HMS Sultan, who along with other staff from the establishment played a five-a-side football match with a difference.

Wearing blacked-out safety spectacles in order to simulate total blindness, the teams used a specially adapted football, enabling players to track its whereabouts through sound.

Organiser WO Bill Bailey said: "Sultan already has a special link with St Dunstan's – we sponsor and host an annual activity camp which enables St Dunstaners to try new and exciting activities, such as kayaking and deep sea fishing.

"The Forces Challenge was a great way for me and the teams to try to put ourselves in the shoes of St Dunstaners living with blindness: it gave a real appreciation of how difficult it is to adapt."

St Dunstan's, founded in 1915, offers life-long support and is a centre of excellence.

RESEARCH by St Dunstan's, the national charity for blind ex-Service men and women, has shown that practical help is the most valued support needed by veterans.

Researchers asked St Dunstaners which element of assistance provided by the charity was the most important – emotional, practical or financial.

Almost half of the people asked (49 per cent) responded practical; just over a third (36

per cent) selected emotional; and only 15 per cent stated financial.

St Dunstan's recognises the need for a holistic approach which embraces financial, emotional and practical.

One former Navy man has benefitted from the charity's approach – Gerry Jackson.

Gerry joined the Royal Navy in February 1957 and entered training for the Fleet Air Arm Radio Electrical Branch.

During his time in the Navy he served in Naval air stations and on aircraft carriers on various second line and front-line squadrons.

In 1959 he became involved with the Fleet Air Arm Field Gun crew and progressed through to the final eliminations when a training injury caused his withdrawal.

He carried out commando training with 42 Commando Royal Marines at Bickleigh, being awarded a green beret. He then went on to join a reformed 848 Commando Helicopter Squadron at Worthy Down, which embarked on board HMS Bulwark.

Gerry left the regular Navy in 1966 and carried on a career in civilian life whilst also serving in the Royal Naval Reserve, until 1984 when he retired as a Chief Petty Officer.

As a civilian Gerry was employed on various tasks connected with the military. He was responsible for the design and installation of various training simulators for the Royal Navy, the RAF and Army.

Gerry then spent time as the design authority for the Ptarmigan communications system into armoured staff vehicles. During this phase he was seconded to the Falkland Islands, taking part in the invasion with 42 Commando returning to UK on cessation of hostilities.

Gerry's last position before retirement was at Orange, the mobile phone giant as a principal

engineer.

Gerry began to lose his sight and was eventually registered blind in January 2002.

He suffers with a condition called extensive bilateral macula oedema with cystic change, retinal pigment epithelial change and scarring.

He has no sight in his left eye and retains only peripheral vision in his right eye. He became a St Dunstaner in June 2003.

He says of St Dunstan's: "When I lost my sight, I felt isolated and frustrated. I'd always been very active and independent and found it hard to adjust.

"Being put in touch with St Dunstan's was like a light going on; the practical support they offered has given me a new lease of life. Specialist staff worked with me on a one-to-one basis to devise a training programme which suited my needs.

"I worked intensively on orientation and mobility as well as other independent living skills. Being trained to use a computer with confidence has really opened up the world for me; I can get involved in the local community and stay in touch with friends and family.

"St Dunstan's has also given me a lifetime loan of a computer and other IT equipment. The emotional support I receive is second to none, the encouragement from staff and camaraderie with other St Dunstaners has inspired me to achieve more every day."

Gerry has been a speaker for St Dunstan's for several years, speaking to local groups and associations and providing them with information about St Dunstan's work and how they have supported him.

For further information on the work of St Dunstan's, visit their website online at www.st-dunstans.org.uk or call 020 7723 5021.



• The RNRMC's new logo

Princess patron for RNRMC

THE Princess Royal was formally welcomed as the new patron of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity at a reception in HMS President, St Katherine's Dock, in London.

The Princess Royal, who was promoted Vice Admiral in November, told the assembled guests she was delighted to become patron of the RNRMC, which had made huge strides in bringing many of the naval charities under its umbrella.

"Joining under one charity means much better connections and a quicker route to distributing money to those who need it most," she said.

The Princess Royal added: "The RNRMC is a well-organised, cost-effective, flexible organisation that can accommodate all levels of charitable activity."

The event also saw the launch of the new logo (see above) for the Naval charity, which is a single charity focus for the whole of the Naval family.

The RNRMC has brought together more than 65 independent charities, trusts and in-service funds over the past two years to create a new charity which enables long-established naval charities to work alongside, whilst maintaining their own identity.

The charities share administrative and legal costs, which means there is more money in the pot to distribute to those in need.

However, most of the charity's money comes from investment income rather than donations.

The take-up rate for the voluntary donation from pay scheme is only about 12 per cent in the Navy, as opposed to about 80 per cent in the RAF.

Recent fundraising events for the RNRMC include AB(Diver) Toby Jones running in the Great South Run in his dive kit, and a 24-hour Ironman Triathlon by Devonport's Southern Diving Unit 1.

Find out more at www.rnrmc.org.uk

Marines show Gumption

THE MOVIE character Forrest Gump is the inspiration for a 3,630 mile run across the USA but this time for charity.

The event is appropriately named The Gumpathon and it starts in New York on April 1 and is planned to finish in Los Angeles two months later in early June.

It represents a unique challenge: crossing three deserts, four time zones and ten mountain ranges, with each man completing 16 miles in relay, so over 60 miles per day, or the equivalent of 34 marathons per runner.

At present the core team is made up of C/Sgt Damian Todd, who dreamt it all up, C/Sgt Brad Keeling, Mne Jamie Jobson and Monty Hall, a former Royal Marine turned TV presenter.

On arrival they hope to be joined by a US Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant, Charles Padilla and extra support crew drawn from both the Royal Marines and the Army, including triple amputee Mne Mark Ormrod who is hoping to run at least a mile a day.

Damian made his decision to organise such an event after Mark lost both his legs and his right arm in Afghanistan.

Whilst the media covers the tragic loss of life in the military, less is said about those who return with life-changing injuries, which make coping with simple tasks, for a previously active person, even more difficult and frustrating.

For this reason Damian chose the Help for Heroes charity and with the involvement of the USMC they hope to raise money for their Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund as well.

Both Help for Heroes and Semper Fi raise funds to support wounded and ill members of the Armed Forces, and their families, throughout their recovery period.

The Gumpathon is a registered Red Letter event in 2010 with Help for Heroes.

If you are interested in supporting this event then visit www.thegumpathon.com.

Diver's drive



• Limbless Service men and women, who are part of the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association (BLESMA), diving in the Red Sea

something about it was a life-changing decision in itself," said John.

Many friends have been made along the way and in particular a strong and on-going partnership with Emperor Fleet, the diving company based in Egypt that provided dive guides and the live-aboard vessel which hosted everyone during that week.

The group visited various famous dive sites down the Sinai Classic route from Sharm El Sheikh and experienced a challenging but hugely rewarding week in every sense.

Terri Hunt, who has lost one leg below the knee and at one point during the week was thinking of giving up, said "In John Strutt I met someone more stubborn than me!" as she went on to achieve the PADI Open Water Diver Certification.

John said "It was difficult at first for the instructors not to

rush to help each diver with their equipment or prosthetics, but in the end all the instructors and boat crew realised that by not stepping in we were encouraging perseverance and self-sufficiency.

"More importantly we learned that they did not want that kind of help.

"It was a humbling experience to watch them overcome the practical difficulties they encountered and it was very educational to listen to the exchange of tips and techniques amongst the students about how to live with their disability.

"Above all my memory is of professionalism, the friendly exchange of service banter and very good company."

Diving gives the disabled total freedom underwater, unlike being on land, and this was best summed up by one of the dads on course dad Tommo.

"I can't play rugby or football

with my boy, but now I can do this with him."

Finally, three years' later they have all just returned from the Red Sea having turned a long-held dream into a reality and with all of them achieving further qualifications along the way.

On all sides everyone has learned more about trust and perseverance from this series of courageous dives.

John is now planning another trip, having just passed the Certificate in Education to enhance his ability to pass on his diving expertise and he is thinking about expanding this type of training to disadvantaged children, those with other health challenges and adults with learning difficulties.

Time is the one resource he is short of so if you are interested in getting involved, please contact John Strutt at John.strutt368@mod.uk, phone 01329 245078 or mobile 07500 871 772.



● PO 'Pinta' Beer featuring his tonsorial topiary

Halfa Pinta beard

THERE is no excuse for it. And we don't mean the pink shirt. Although there's no excuse for that either.

PO Antony 'Pinta' Beer, at one-time a regular feature of *Navy News* articles on HMS Brocklesby, took part in his ship's beard-growing competition during their recent NATO deployment to the Baltic and Mediterranean to raise money for the ship's chosen charities.

Pinta said: "I grew the most fantastic beard. Then the lads heard that my wife had threatened to kill me if I didn't shave it off."

"So that was it. The lads started a bidding war to keep the beard and have the right to shave it into the shape they wanted."

The winners crafted a charming finished product (pictured above).

"It raised £200. But my wife hadn't seen me for three months."

"She wasn't happy..."
(Not sure what she thought of that shirt either... - Ed)

But the efforts of the whole ship's crew, led by Pinta and his oppo PO 'Chip' Miles and with special mention to Lt Jon Campbell who went halves on the canteen but took nothing for himself - raised £1,000 for the RNA in Portsmouth and are hoping to raise another £1,000 for Help the Aged.

Songs with SSAFA

SSAFA and Chris Whiting, a musician, have teamed up to launch one of his often performed songs entitled *My Boy*, about a father sending his son off to war.

All proceeds will be used to help troops and their families through SSAFA projects like Norton House, which is near the Selly Oak Hospital: it offers accommodation to the injured serviceman or woman's extended family, including partners, so they can be nearby when really needed.

"This song is for those brave men and women serving our country, and it is every bit as much for their families, whose hearts are carried by those soldiers every single moment of every single day," said Chris, a Midlander who therefore knew of SSAFA's excellent work at Norton House.

Chris worked with Jon Brookes, the drummer with The Charlatans and the single is being released through Black Sheep Records on December 14.

The CD can be ordered through www.chriswhitingmusic.co.uk or Black Sheep Records at www.dittomusic.com; or you can also obtain a copy from: www.ssafa.co.uk.

Pudsey earns his stripes

PUDSEY Bear paid a visit to Cornwall's RNAS Culdrose, and met up with a few more predators from the Merlin Flying Tigers crew.

As has become an annual event, members of the RN Motor Cycle Club jumped on their bikes in aid of Children in Need.

The Culdrose branch raised almost £500 during a short visit to RNAS Culdrose and the combined branches of the club have raised a magnificent £15,620 during their sponsored tour of the south-west.

Pudsey Bear was on hand to oversee the Runway Dash and accompanying the motorcyclists down the runway was a Merlin helicopter, part of the Flying Tigers of 814 Naval Air Squadron.

After 24 years of supporting the Children in Need Appeal the total money raised by the bikers has broken through the £250,000 barrier.

During the live BBC TV broadcast the Navy motorcyclists rode their bikes into the Sea Life Centre in Weymouth to present their cheque in person to the organisers of the appeal.

Other events at Culdrose included a 'cakes and crafts' stall in the cyber café and a sponsored face painting marathon at 814 NAS during which the squadron CO and other senior officers put themselves at the mercy of the face painters (see picture top).

Pudsey Bear was kept busy in the West Country on Children in Need night. Members of 815 NAS donned lycra shorts, got on their bikes and cycled through the night for a 24-hour cyclethon all in aid of the big bear's charity.

Cdr Nigel Amphlett, Lynx Force Commander, was first on the bike. Before starting his stint he said: "We wanted to get involved and do something different that would fit around the working routines of the Squadron."

"This is quite a challenge and we're looking forward to raising a lot of money."

After cheering on the cyclists Pudsey needed to get to Bridgwater to kick start the BBC South West's Children in Need coverage and to get him there on time he was flown by one of the Lynx helicopters of 702 NAS, after posing for a picture with



the squadron's maintainers (see above).

Money was also collected at the main gate and personnel gave generously to the cause.

Brig Mark Noble, Commanding Officer RNAS Yeovilton, said: "Personnel here at Yeovilton are working hard to support the front line.

"It is heartening to see, in these exceptionally busy times, that charities at home are not forgotten and support continues for such a worthy cause."

Thirteen Royal Navy, Army and civilian cyclists departed Navy Command HQ on November 11 for a 100-mile charity ride to

Brighton and back again, raising £987 for the charity.

The ride organiser, Lt Cdr Jon Pollard, said: "The cycling conditions were nigh on perfect - dry and with very little wind."

"It being Armistice Day the group took time out at Shoreham Church to pay their respects, but declined the kind offer of hospitality back at the Royal British Legion."

"After spending just over five hours in the saddle, all riders arrived back safely in the late afternoon a little tired but nonetheless satisfied with their sterling efforts in aid of a worthy cause."

As if this was not enough - the Bulwark team and members of staff from Framwellgate Moor Sainsbury's store took part in a charity row across the 'Channel' to raise funds and awareness of the work of Trinity School.

The row was completed in four hours and raised in excess of £500. This was on top of £500 donated by the ship's company to the school for specially adapted play equipment and £250 to Forest School for outdoor play equipment.

Julie Connolly, head teacher of Trinity School, said: "The school really enjoyed the visit from HMS Bulwark personnel, particularly having them take part in the assembly and the presentation of the cheque for play equipment."

"Then it was time for some minor repairs - these included re-laying an area of block paving, clearing play areas of leaves and

dismantling equipment.

"These jobs are very important and in school life just never managed to get to the top of the list."

The week concluded with attendance at the Durham Cathedral Remembrance Sunday Service where the ship's company were joined by their Commanding Officer Capt Gavin Pritchard.

Cllr Brian Myers, the chairman



● The Twelve Days of Elvis on the Rock: Leading Dental Hygienist Jo Harris and Sgt Andy Davis of British Forces Gibraltar

Rock stars

TOURISTS to Gibraltar last month must have been somewhat distracted by the ultimate celeb-spot - Elvis. Especially when they thought they were seeing double...

But in fact, the two Elvis impersonators are Leading Dental Hygienist Jo Harris and Sgt Andy Davis of the Joint Admin Unit of British Forces Gibraltar, who spent the 12 days of Christmas clambering to the top of The Rock in their doppelgänger gear.

The fundraising stunt was the brainchild of Andy, who said: "I always do my own individual charity appeal, but instead of the Twelve Days of Christmas I thought I'd concentrate on the Twelve Days of Elvis."

"I'm a big Elvis fan (never would have guessed - Ed); I even have a genuine Elvis autograph on a Christmas card he sent when he was serving with the US Army in Germany."

His partner in spangled jumpsuit is Jo Harris, who admitted: "One of my colleagues was supposed to be doing this but she was called back to the UK."

"However I've been a big Elvis fan since I was given two Elvis tapes when I was just six years old so I was happy to step into her blue suede shoes."

After 12 days of climbing, the distinctive duo hope to have raised over £1,200 for their nominated charities.

"We wanted to donate half the money to Help for Heroes and the other half to a local charity," explained Andy.

"And as my unit does some voluntary work at the Lady Williams Cancer Support Centre, it seemed an obvious choice."

Anyone wishing to pledge their support to what has to be one of the most distinctive fundraising efforts of last year, should visit www.justgiving.com/Andrew-Davis1.

Uh huh huh...

Basket cases

IMAGINE a World Championship for sailing a basket across the River Severn - well, in case you can't, here's a bit about it.

A team of student pilots from the Defence Helicopter Flying School at RAF Shawbury became Coracle World Champions when the event was held at Pengwern Boat Club in Shrewsbury.

Three teams from RAF Shawbury entered the competition which involved rowing a coracle - a small, bowl-shaped, one-man rowing boat which has remained unchanged for thousands of years - across the River Severn.

As coracles are notoriously difficult to row many competitors found themselves drinking mouthfuls of Severn water.

The teams not only achieved a first and third placing in the event but also raised £972 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Friday brew

SOME would say that it is best if unlucky Friday 13th passes by without event. Not so for personnel at RNAS Culdrose who held a 'Big Brew' morning for naval and civilian personnel to drop in for a cup of tea and choice of bacon, sausage and egg rolls or a slice of home-made cake. The event raised £185 for SSAFA.



● Sailors from HMS Bulwark at Trinity School in Durham

Picture: LA(Phot) Shaun Barlow

Bricks and Bulwark

A GROUP of sailors from HMS Bulwark visited their affiliated county, County Durham, in November to tell of their daring deeds whilst deployed to the Far East last year.

A team of 20 members of the ship's company, led by Cdr Phil Waterhouse and Lt Robby Robinson, travelled from Plymouth to County Durham to affirm its close ties with the county.

The team spent five days in the north and had the opportunity to visit a number of their affiliates: Forest of Teesdale Primary School, Trinity Special School, and children in Durham University Hospital.

The ship also has strong links with Seaham Special Care Home, Aycliffe Young Persons Institute and numerous Sea Cadet units in the county.

The sailors were able to assist with many projects at Forest of Teesdale Primary School including digging the vegetable garden, building a boat using old wood and furniture, before making a bonfire - well, it was November 5...

"The ship has an extremely

close relationship with County Durham and we value it hugely. "We are always made to feel very welcome by everyone and it is especially rewarding to be able to make a difference, however small, by doing some charitable work," said Cdr Waterhouse.

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And, what is more, the vast majority of journeys left and arrived bang on time.

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The 351 to Gloucester took them through some charming villages, and a smooth connection saw the travellers hop onto the 73 to Chepstow – although the two-minute sortie into Wales across the River Wye saw a supplementary charge of £1.30 each.

But the disappointment of having to pay for a bus journey was swiftly forgotten as the pair enjoyed another pint before catching the X14 to Bristol – with the added benefit of front seats to enjoy the views as they crossed the Severn back into England.

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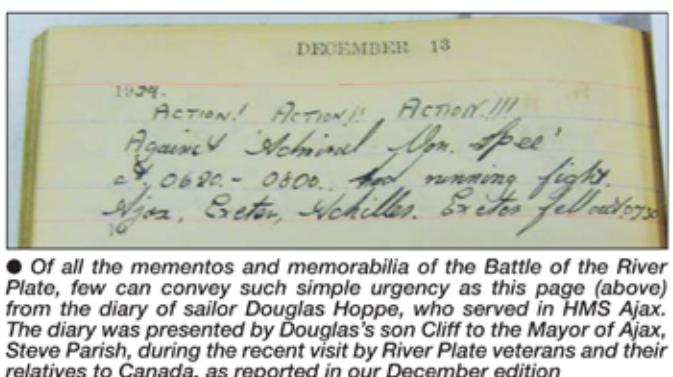
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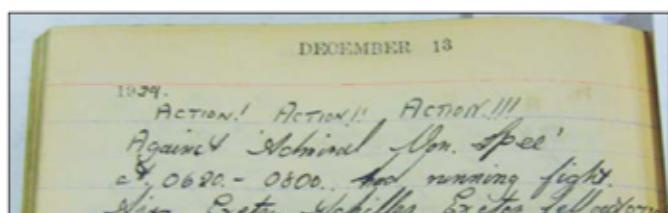
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Parking changes at Brize

BRIZE Norton is going through a radical change in its car parking facilities and hire car procedures.

A new Hire Car Zone has been provided on the site of the old long term car park.

Hire cars are no longer allowed on station and are to be parked in the new allocated zone. Passengers then catch a shuttle bus to the terminal.

Passengers arriving at the terminal book their hire car at the desks in the terminal building and then catch the shuttle bus to collect their car.

This is an interim arrangement until the hire car companies have connectivity at the hire car zone, when all transactions will be completed there.

A new passenger car park has opened. This has limited spaces and is operated on a pre-book system through WO Pax Plans. Full details are on the website.

There are parking spaces available in front of the terminal for dropping off and picking up passengers.

For more information go to: www.raf.mod.uk/rafbrizenorton/flyinginfo for general information and www.raf.mod.uk/rafbrizenorton/flyinginfo for car park bookings.

Chinese visit to Ocean

THE helicopter carrier HMS Ocean played host to Chinese Admiral Su during his recent visit to Devonport Naval Base.

Vice Admiral Su, Chief of Staff to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), was visiting the UK to observe Royal Naval training.

Accompanied onboard HMS Ocean by Rear Admiral Chris Snow, Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST), Vice Admiral Su was greeted by the Executive Officer, Cdr Mark Taylor, and was given a full tour of the 20,700 tonne amphibious ship, the largest RN warship.

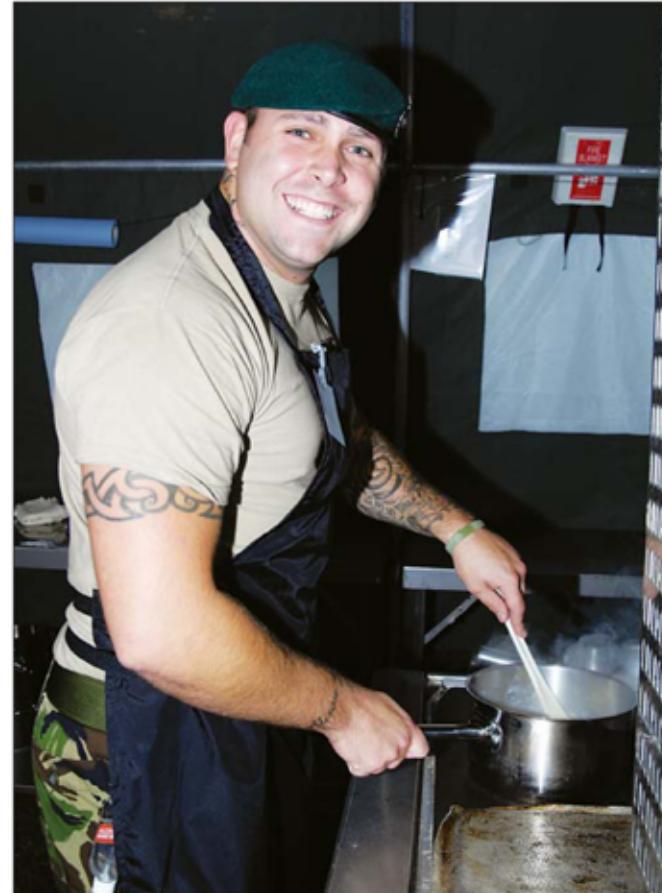
As part of Admiral Su's very full visit he also took in Royal Navy Command Headquarters in Portsmouth, Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, HMS Raleigh in Cornwall and the two training establishments near Portsmouth, HMS Collingwood and HMS Sultan.

HMS Ocean is currently undergoing a maintenance period alongside in Devonport following her six-month deployment to the Far East as part of the Taurus 09 Task Group last year.

It's your 2-6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the Royal Navy?

To feature in the Navy News 2-6 pages contact Lt Cdr Heather Lane or WO1 Baz Cooke (Fleet Media Ops) on 93832 8809 or 93832 8821, email FLEET-DCS-INFO-IC SO2 or FLEET-DCS-INFO-IC WO.



• Best Chef winner Mne Stevie Fowler



Pictures: LA(Phot) Jennie Burn

Catering for the Corps

WHEN the topic of feeding raises its head, the press is always about Pay As You Dine (PAYD) and the contractor; so is there any interest in the RM Chefs and the Corps Cookery Competition? asks WO2 Steve 'Sharky' Ward RM, Unit Caterer, CTCRM.

Some short, sharp replies like operational feeding, morale, self-sufficiency and personal pride, should answer that question.

So why do we have a Corps Cookery Competition?

It's tough for the chief cooks to prioritise training for this event with such busy unit programmes, it's an inconvenience to administer and motivation is low to attend the competition.

But, once all of the teams are assembled on Sylvan Glade at CTCRM and the chefs are turning and burning - 'burning' I hasten to add is a technical term and has no reference to the end product of food production - that is when the culinary flair and RM competitive spirit is enough to get the juices flowing.

This competition is the prerequisite for the Combined Services Culinary Challenge and the best four teams go forward to represent the Naval Service Culinary Arts Team in the prestigious Blue Ribbon event of the field cookery.

The 2009 RM competition was fiercely contested and congratulations go to the winners 42 Cdo RM, closely followed by UKLF CSG, CLR, RM Poole and CTCRM.

A total of eight teams took part including RMR Tyne, and the 'Best Chef' was awarded to Mne Stevie Fowler of UKLF CSG... I foresee a draft to the Officers Mess on the cards, you heard it here first!

The Corps Cookery Competition also gives all attending chefs the opportunity to reunite and exchange lessons learned and best practice from feeding on exercise and ops.

The Operational Field Catering System (OFCS) has almost completely replaced all of its LPG predecessors.

It is good for large scale static feeding and is excellent when it is required to send food forward.

The competition allows the chefs to swap ideas which result in an overall better end product.

Our K4 Chefs, now, the K3 Commando Chefs, use this event to glean tried-and-tested methods of making ten-man ambient rations more palatable.

Chefs at Forward Operating Bases (FOB) are compiling recipe books that get left for the next rotating Chef to expand upon, so that more and more imaginative ideas are being passed to some of the most junior chefs.

Going full circle; chefs are now, again, being trained on improvised cookery, so that when required they can train the trainers to safely operate makeshift ovens in the FOBs and patrol bases (PB), which will bring an extra dose of morale to the rotation of boil-in-the-bags.

The competitive spirit raises its head again with dits of all ranks battling in the PBs for the title of Head Chef.

The creation of a 3 Commando Brigade Catering Warrant Officer,

has been timely and now lets us fight at the correct weight with the Army and RAF.

It has also brought immediate cohesion to the 'K' spec with better overall comms, working practice and shared lessons identified.

On a recent visit to Herrick units, Gordon Ramsay commented that he had nothing but respect for the huge effort that chefs expended to ensure that the troops got enough good food.

Producing variety in such a very dangerous environment is undoubtedly daunting.

Young men generally do not aspire to be a Royal Marines Commando so that they can cook, but recruitment from within the Corps is quite steady.

To some: "Too many cooks spoil the broth" - we are most definitely not cooks, there's defiantly not too many of us and broth is not an option!

A question was posed to the RM Chef SME "Do we need RM Chefs?"

The reply was swift, positive and passionate: "Yes, because of all of the above."

New year in uniform

IT IS important for the Royal Navy to increase the visibility of naval personnel, especially in areas where there is no naval presence.

However, it is essential that the right image is presented to the public and in order to achieve this certain guidelines are to be followed.

The wearing of uniform in public demands the highest standards of dress, bearing and behaviour, and Service personnel must be aware that they are effectively representing the Service.

In broad terms personnel should generally wear uniform for all official and semi-official functions, eg during visits to affiliates.

Service personnel are encouraged to wear uniform for travelling to and from work and leave, travel across the country on duty and, with CO's permission, for events such as wedding and graduation ceremonies.

Although the RN wishes to promote the wearing of uniform in public there are times when it is clearly inappropriate to do so. These include, but are not limited to: visits to licensed premises, fancy dress parties, carnival/political marches, and when hitchhiking.

It is inappropriate to wear a mix of civilian and military rig, except when travelling by motorcycle/bicycle as uniform does not afford a sufficient level of protection.

Full details of the policy can be found in 2009DIN01-126.

Help change NFF fights for uniforms

HOW many times have you moaned about your uniform not being fit for the job in you need to do?

Now is the opportunity to influence what you might be wearing in the future.

A recent review highlighted potential deficiencies in the current range of operational clothing and recommended that a study be undertaken to ascertain what these might be.

This review is going to include RN, RM and RFA personnel – the Naval Service (NS). The work on this begins this month.

The study team needs your input as you are the people who actually wear the kit.

Initially, it is concentrating on operational clothing – No 4s and CS95, but there may be potential to include all uniform items – although this amounts to some 5,000 line items; a massive task.

The study team are particularly keen for comments on layered AWD – how it functions in different climatic conditions – Barrack Dress (No3s, Lovats (half and full), tropical, firefighting, flight deck, submarine and foul weather (afloat and ashore) clothing. At this stage it is not planned to include Ceremonial Uniforms, or badges.

The study is required to

specifically comment on such things as: the applicability and coherence of the NS clothing fire retardancy policy; the military appearance of NS clothing and the need for a clear RN corporate identity to be incorporated and any tri-Service clothing issues that arise.

The study team will be out and about liaising directly with the user through various visits and briefs to units to get the picture on clothing from the ground floor up.

So that everyone who wishes is able to contribute to the study, the 'Stitch Up' form normally used for clothing feedback is to be used.

Personnel are invited to put forward their suggestions and recommendations in this format.

Submission of the form may be done throughout the study, but given the short period in which the team has to assess the issues, personnel are encouraged to input their feedback by the end of next month (February 2010).

Think about all the times you have grumbled about your uniform, this is your chance to do something about getting things changed.

The study team will produce the final report in September 2010.

Further information will be available in an RNTM.

IT IS always positive to start any new year with good news, and if the start is anything to go by 2010 is shaping up nicely, writes Jane Williams of the Naval Families Federation.

■ **Childcare vouchers:** decision rescinded. The Prime Minister announced he was scrapping the tax relief on childcare vouchers at the Labour's annual conference in September – the tax relief is currently worth up to £1,200 approximately to 4,000 Service families who use Ofsted approved nurseries across the UK.

This announcement sparked correspondence from the Naval Families Federation. This is the letter Kim Richardson, Chair NFF wrote to Kevan Jones MP, Under Secretary of State for Defence:

"I am writing to you today on behalf of all three Families Federations on a subject that has caused us some alarm.

"In his keynote speech to the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, the Prime Minister revealed that from April 2011 employees who join an employer-supported voucher scheme will not be entitled to the existing exemptions.

"Also that from April 2015, existing recipients of vouchers will have their vouchers withdrawn completely.

"Although the take up for vouchers in MOD has not been as high as we would have liked, I would like to register concern on behalf of each and every one of the families who subscribe to this scheme.

"Our families are telling us that accessible affordable childcare is a challenge, so to remove something that has gone some way to making this easier is, in our view, a retrograde step.

"Free nursery places are a terrific idea, but are they really going to be a realistic option for our mobile population who are always joining the bottom of the waiting list?

"As an aside, you may be interested to know that the website Netmums has registered over 200 comments on the subject – all expressing concern – and that the Downing Street petition asking the Prime Minister to rethink the decision has over 31,000 signatures.

"I have copied this letter to the Minister for Women and Equality as she has expressed an interest in Service families and the challenges they are currently experiencing in finding work and childcare.

"This is the first time I have felt the need to correspond with you directly outside our planned meetings, which I hope will reinforce the importance we place on this. I look forward to hearing from you."

The questions that emanated from the announcement saw Ministerial backbench pressure to review the plans and the government has decided to rescind the proposed changes. Result!

should make arrangements with the Base Port Medical Centre for vaccination.

For those personnel currently deployed on Op Herrick PJHQ Medical Staff are co-ordinating an in-theatre vaccination programme.

Personnel deploying to Op Herrick 11 should be vaccinated within four weeks of departure.

The Swine Flu vaccine will protect you against pandemic influenza; it will not protect you from other illnesses, including seasonal flu.

Because of the potential seriousness of pandemic influenza, it is strongly recommended that you have the vaccine.

Some side effects should be expected. Some people may experience mild flu-like symptoms for up to 48 hours after immunisation as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu.

No vaccine is 100 per cent effective; however, most people who are vaccinated will not get pandemic influenza.

There are very few people who cannot have the vaccination.

If you have a very serious allergy to hens' eggs or other components of the vaccine, you should not have the vaccine.

This is rare but if you are unsure you should check with your medical adviser.

For personnel who do not fall into the priority groups mentioned above the advice is that the use of the vaccine on healthy personnel will depend on how the pandemic evolves and on emerging clinical data on the use of the vaccine.

This will be kept under review.

For more information visit the DH Swine Flu website: www.dh.gov.uk/en/publichealth/flu/swineflu or seek advice from your Medical Centre or Sickbay.

NFF fights for childcare



RFA in review

CINCFLEET Admiral Sir Trevor Soar has spoken out to assure the men and women of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary of the "enormous value and significant contribution they make on a daily basis to the success of Royal Naval operations worldwide."

The admiral issued these words of support in response to an announcement from the Government that a review of the services provided by the RFA is taking place.

As part of the Treasury's Operational Efficiency Programme, the MOD has formed a Review Group – bringing together people from the Naval Service, MOD and Treasury – to look at the RFA and how it does its business.

The group, which counts the Commodore RFA, Cdr Bill Walworth, as one of its members, will be looking into the role of maritime operational support to joint operations and means to deliver best value for money.

The initial meeting of the group has already taken place, and it is expected to report to Ministers later this year.

The admiral is keen to allay concerns among people in the RFA and added: "This review does not necessarily imply that change is planned."

Yule chatter

THOUSANDS of deployed personnel in Afghanistan, who were away from family and friends this Christmas, were given an extra one hour's free phone call time.

Operational troops routinely receive 30 minutes of free talk time each week from the Ministry of Defence which can be used to make phone calls, using a service provided by the communications company Paradigm.

Troops also have unlimited access to the internet and are able to email home.

This year during the festive period personnel received an additional 30 minutes free talk time from the MOD and 30 minutes from Paradigm, allowing them to chat to family and friends for an extra hour over the Christmas period.

Award for Drake learners

A TEAM from the Learning Centre in HMS Drake have been awarded a Highly Commended certificate for Centre of the Year in the 2009 National Learndirect Achievement Awards.

The award ceremony took place in London on October 19, hosted by Sarah Jones, the Chief Executive of Learndirect.

The award was presented by the TV presenter Eamonn Holmes and his partner Ruth Langsford.

Tracy Murphy, Rachel Butler and Kathryn Harvey beat 103 Army and Navy centres to be put forward for the award.

In the final they competed against 12 civilian learning centres for the award.

Although, narrowly pipped to the post for the trophy by a centre from the North West, the team should be hugely proud of their fantastic achievement in a national competition.

Opened in 2005, the Drake Learndirect centre is part of the Naval Education and Training Service (NETS).

"They have a history of first-class service in support of their learners and this award is

the icing on the cake for their performance to date," said Cdr Jerry Townshend, SO1 NETS.

He is particularly proud of his team. "This award sends a tremendous message of success to naval learners."

"It is extremely gratifying to know that Royal Navy achievements are not only exceeding those of the other Services but competing at a national level."

"My staff are a committed team and I am delighted that they have been recognised with this award."

The RN has enjoyed its most successful year to date in terms of learner achievement through Learndirect, with over 500 national tests completed in the last academic year.

The RN uses Learndirect to deliver computer based training and testing for the Literacy and Numeracy Testing and Education in the Royal Navy (LANTERN) programme.

The LANTERN educational programme provides the educational qualifications for promotion to Leading Hand/Corporal and Petty Officer/Sergeant and replaced NAMET



● Cdr Jerry Townshend (SO1 NETS) and Lt Cdr Ian Taylor (SO2 NETS(West)) with the Drake Learndirect team (l to r) Tracey Murphy and Kathryn Harvey and Izzy Dunbar, the Basic Skills Manager.

in 2006.

Learners achieve nationally recognised qualifications in Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

From April 2012 NAMET scores will no longer be extant and RN and RM personnel will have to have LANTERN qualifications for promotion.



Super marina nation

HOW many gears does an Italian tank have?

Five: four for reverse, one for going forward in case they were attacked in the rear.

What do you call 100,000 Italians raising their hands in the air? The army.

Breaking news from Afghanistan: the Italians have surrendered.

We could go on – but we won't. Long is the shadow of WW2 that jokes about Italian military efficiency (or otherwise) live on.

Most relate to the performance of the Italian Army, the *Regia Esercito*, but not a few myths and slurs persist about its naval counterpart, the *Regia Marina*: that it came off worse in most actions it fought, that it turned for home at every opportunity.

The facts show us otherwise, as Vincent O'Hara attempts to demonstrate in his *Struggle for the Middle Sea: The Great Navies at War in the Mediterranean 1940-1945* (Conway, £20 ISBN 978-184486-61026).

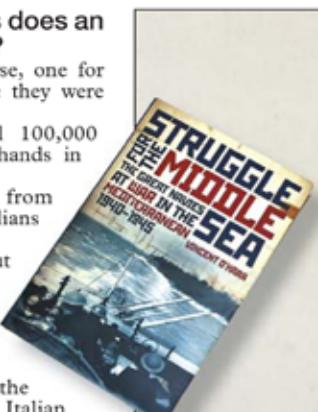
O'Hara looks at all five major powers whose navies fought for control of the Middle Sea: Royal Navy, Kriegsmarine, Marine Nationale, US Navy and the Italian fleet.

The result is an excellent, detailed yet readable, history of a very brutal campaign.

How brutal? Well, there were 55 surface engagements – all but five of them involving the RN – in the Mediterranean theatre (including the Red Sea) according to O'Hara's research. There were 57 in the Atlantic/Arctic, three dozen in the Pacific.

Using an excellent series of tables, accompanied by many maps, the author provides an excellent breakdown of each surface action, as well as easy-to-understand graphs which chart the rise and fall of Allied and Axis fortunes.

In the first six months of 1942, for example, 19 in every 20 ships carrying material to North Africa to support the German-Italian



● HMS Indomitable runs the gauntlet to Malta, escorted by HMS Charybdis, during the legendary Pedestal convoy in August 1942

push on Cairo arrived safely. In the second half of the year, the figure was just 15 in every 20.

No wonder, then, that as 1943 opened, the head of the *Regia Marina*'s intelligence section Franco Maugeri wrote: "Our situation now seems clear and sharp to me: we have lost the war."

The Italians bowed out of the war that September, but the struggle for the Mediterranean continued with the Kriegsmarine taking over some of the Italian fleet as well as what ever forces it could commandeer from its conquered territories.

The Germans fought to the very

end – but they waged a poor man's war, lost almost every encounter – and more than 60 vessels in the process. Their sacrifice did, however, stall the Allied advance.

O'Hara's command of sources is impressive, in particular his use of British and Italian archival material. Referring to the latter gives the Royal Navy's then foe a belated voice.

Take the first Battle of Sirte in December 1941, a sign of RN moral and fighting superiority according to British sources... or for Italian sources "one of the three or four turning points of the war for Italy. The route to Libya, red with the blood of Italian

sailors, could now be considered open again".

The book is not without its shortcomings. Some readers may feel the author gives the Italian Navy too much credit, the RN too little. And what certainly does raise eyebrows Roger-Moore-fashion is the sidelining of submarine and aerial actions in favour of surface clashes.

The combined aerial and underwater campaign against Axis shipping to North Africa in 1943, for example, dealt the enemy a far heavier blow than any losses inflicted by surface forces, while the Taranto raid is dispatched in a handful of sentences; a surface

action in the Otranto strait that same night receives two pages.

Shedding light on many of these 'forgotten actions' is not necessarily a bad thing – not least because it shows the efforts made by the warring factions in the Mediterranean on a daily basis – but it does lead to a rather blinkered view of the struggle for the Middle Sea.

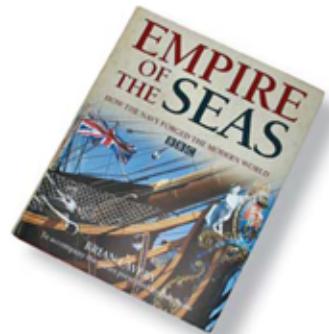
That said, there is some excellent myth-busting here. Contemporary and post-war German commentators were scathing of the Italian Navy's performance (far more so than their British counterparts). Eberhard Weichold, the Kriegsmarine's liaison officer in Rome, thought the Italians "soft and weak".

They were neither: 98 per cent of the troops and 90 per cent of the material escorted by the *Regia Marina* reached its destination.

It paid a heavy price for its efforts. Nearly two dozen Italian ships were sunk at the hands of RN surface vessels (just three destroyers were sunk in surface actions by the Italians). Its record in night fighting was woeful. The RN was better trained, better equipped, better informed and possessed a better doctrine.

Yet the Royal Navy was also – and many commentators will challenge this point – "workmanlike" at its worst and, above all, fought the wrong war, the author believes, when it should have focused on defeating the Germans in the European theatre.

If it was the 'wrong war', then at least it was an illustrious one. O'Hara acknowledges: "The Royal Navy's deeds in the Mediterranean fill a proud chapter in that service's glorious history."



From Armada to Scapa Flow

Empire of the Seas (£20, Conway 978-184486-1095) is the book of the eponymous documentary which should be appearing on TV screens about now (there's no accompanying T-shirt, thankfully...).

The programme is presented by Dan (son of Peter) Snow; the book features a few pictures of Dan (in suitably brooding/pensive mood), but the words are left to one of the authorities of the RN's history, Brian Lavery.

He's produced a clutch of first-rate books on many facets of the Senior Service.

Empire of the Seas is aimed at the more general market/reader.

Which is no bad thing because in this age of sea blindness its worth reminding the Britons that the 'great' which was their nation's prefix for so long came courtesy of the Royal Navy.

Such panoramas can be a Nelson-centric, or focus on the Napoleonic Wars, but Lavery casts his net wider, beginning with the defeat of the Armada (as good a 'birthday' of the RN as you'll find in Britain's maritime history – and the first battle honour awarded).

In his overview of the centuries, the author picks stories possibly known by the general public (the execution of Admiral Byng, the revolutionary work of Capt Cook and Darwin) and the not-so-common (how the need to copper sheath hulls sparked an industrial boom in Cornwall and Anglesey, how the RN was streets ahead of British society in the early 19th Century as a meritocracy, how British ships helped bring an end to the slave trade, how technology gave Britain a decisive edge over the Chinese Fleet in the Opium Wars).

The years of *Pax Victoria* are often seen as an age of sloth and complacency. They were years liberally interspersed with conflict, there was radical change (from sail to steam, from gun decks to turrets, iron to steel, the arrival of the torpedo, submarines, the turbine engine).

Yet it was also an age of deference, of rigid discipline, of increased centralisation (which reached its apotheosis/nadir with Jellicoe's battle orders) and increasing mechanisation which gnawed at life of the lower decks, as Winston Churchill observed: "The life of the bluejacket and stoker in our finest ships of war is one of pitiable discomfort."

Such first-hand accounts pepper *Empire of the Seas*, bringing four centuries of naval history to life. The book's also very nicely produced and lavishly illustrated – it's the quirky stuff which stands out, like an advert selling 'obsolete war vessels' in Portsmouth Harbour in 1910, including the battleship Barfleur, or a diagram explaining how to exercise on a dreadnought.

(There's a 'but' coming...).

But, what is surprising is that *Empire of the Seas* ends before the British Empire.

Lavery guillotines his account with the end of WW1; the Empire limped on for another 30 years, during which time the Royal Navy "would find new glory and affection".

Then again, WW1 might be the right place to end this account, for it is where the demise of the RN and the rise of the Army as our principal fighting force – in the public's eyes, that is – began.

The Senior Service helped win the war (decisively), but lost the PR battle – a salutary lesson as apposite now as it was then.

Heaven 17th Century

The Grove Review

RICHARD Endsor is an excellent example of the amateur historian at his best.

A production engineer by profession, he has made 17th-Century ships and shipbuilding his passion and has spent a great deal of time in serious research that would do credit to a professional historian, writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

He has fully exploited his contacts with the acknowledged experts on the period – Peter LeFevre, David Davies and Anne Coats – and has also benefitted from consultations with specialist experts on shipbuilding and artillery.

This is a classic example of how the wider naval historical community can enable its members to produce first class work.

Such is Endsor's new study of the design, construction and career of the 70-gun third-rate ship of the line Lenox – *The Restoration Warship: The Design, Construction and Career of a Third Rate of Charles II's Navy* (Conway, £50 ISBN 978 1 84460 88 3).

Lenox was named after Charles, Duke of Richmond and Lennox, son of King Charles II and his mistress Louise de Keroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth.

She was built remarkably quickly, being launched on 12 April 1678 but went straight into 'ordinary' (that is reserve), moored at Chatham on the seventh or eighth mooring down from Rochester bridge, as the author carefully notes.

She was ten years in this condition, not being very well preserved it would seem, until she was commissioned in 1689 to bolster the fleet against France, England having changed sides in the Franco-Dutch wars as a result of the invasion and revolution of the previous year.

On commissioning she was armed with twenty two 32 pounder 'demi-cannon' supplemented by four 18-pounder long 'culverins' on her lower gun deck bolstered by 38 nine-pounder 'demi-culverins' on her upper decks and

forecastle and six three pounders on the poop.

Lenox's first action was the unfortunate Battle of Beachy Head when Admiral Torrington, the officer who had brought William III to England, was forced by Queen Mary II to engage a superior French fleet.

Later strategists would praise Torrington's ability to keep his 'fleet in being' but, following the inevitable reverse, the Admiral was thrown into prison and court martialled.

Although acquitted he was never placed in command again; neither was Lenox's captain Granville, whose support for his erstwhile commander was not politically wise.

After Beachy Head, Lenox operated off Ireland and then was part of the fleet that won the great victories of Barfleur and La Hogue in 1692 but which was less successful in defence of trade the following year.

In 1694, by now under the command of Captain Christopher Myngs, Lenox was part of Russell's fleet in the Mediterranean. 1695 saw stormy convoy duty and 1696 a major repair.

It was back to convoying in 1697 before peace came in October. Then Lenox returned to the Nore and reserve before the ship was taken back to Deptford as a 'worn-out wreck' to be completely rebuilt into what the author regards as a new ship (that would last for almost another half century).

Endsor covers this story in absolutely amazing detail.

The book is a veritable triumph of research into all aspects of naval life in the late 17th Century, with Lenox as the perfect hook on which to hang the analysis.

There is fascinating material on timber supply, shipbuilding and shipbuilders, (including detailed analysis of 'shipwright productivity').

One interesting point the author



makes is the extent shipwrights were pressed (ie conscripted) to build ships as well as seamen to man them in wartime.

Other chapters provide detailed coverage of sails and rigging, armament, recruitment and life on board.

In all Lenox's seven-year period of service its crew served a total of 3,000 crew years aboard and only 115 died of all causes, few actually in action.

Good food generally kept sickness away. No court martial records survive for Lenox although there are some for her contemporaries and the indications are that she was a happy and well run ship by any standard.

The author also fully understands the political background of the period when connection, religion and faction dominated appointment of officers. The day of the apolitical servant of the state was still a long way off.

The book shows that its publisher Conway, now taken over by Anova Press, has lost none of its ability to produce a very handsome book.

It is exceptionally well illustrated with impressive fold out plans of the ship, deck by deck, and diagrams of every aspect of her fittings. The colour plates are excellent and I rather liked the sepia tones used for the rest of the book which gave a suitably 'period' feel to it. The price asked is not an unreasonable one for such a beautiful volume.

We have been lucky over the past 12 months or so to see the publication of two truly excellent books on a period of naval history that has, on the whole, received insufficient attention.

J D Davies' *Pepys's Navy* covered the slightly earlier period of 1649-89 while Endsor, despite his subtitle, continues the story after the Revolution with a nice connective overlap into the late Stuart period.

The approach is, of course, rather different – the telescope being looked through from either end as it were – but the result has been two highly-significant additions to naval historiography.

Then again, WW1 might be the right place to end this account, for it is where the demise of the RN and the rise of the Army as our principal fighting force – in the public's eyes, that is – began.

The Senior Service helped win the war (decisively), but lost the PR battle – a salutary lesson as apposite now as it was then.

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Trophy lives



ON January 22 1944 Allied forces under Major General John P Lucas conducted an amphibious assault on Anzio and Nettuno on the west coast of Italy.

Codenamed Operation Shingle, the objective was to outflank German forces and then to attack Rome.

The landing of 40,000 soldiers was supported from the sea by five cruisers (including HMS Delhi), 24 destroyers, 238 landing craft and 62 other vessels.

Enemy resistance was expected to be strong but, in the event, apart from being strafed by the Luftwaffe, the landings were largely unopposed.

By midnight on the first day 36,000 troops and 3,200 vehicles had been landed on the beaches; casualties were light with only 13 Allied troops killed and 97 wounded while 200 Germans had been captured.

The First Division had penetrated up to 3km inland, the American Rangers had captured the port of Anzio, another American unit had captured Nettuno and the Third Division was 5km inland.

Aware that the attack on Rome would be far more fiercely contested General Lucas consolidated his supplies and forces in

preparation for the attack; this failure to head for Rome quickly provoked Winston Churchill to remark: "I had hoped we were hurtling a wildcat into the shore, but all we got was a stranded whale."

During the first month following the landings the Royal and American Navies had 13 ships either badly damaged or lost.

The most serious ship casualties for the Royal Navy were the sinkings of the cruisers HMS Janus, Spartan and Penelope.

Six landing ships and assault craft were sunk, as were three Liberty ships carrying ammunition and other supplies.

Unfortunately there were also unwarranted attacks on three hospital ships moored off-shore, painted white in accordance with the Geneva Convention and flood lit at night.

The St David was bombed and sunk with the loss of 60 lives while St Andrew and Leinster suffered bomb damage but did not sink.

The light cruiser HMS Delhi is depicted leaving Malta in **Trophy No 23046**, which is a watercolour painting signed by Sidney James, the artist, of her sailing from Malta at some time between the two World Wars.

Reunions

MARCH 2010

2nd Submarine Squadron (Sunshine Squadron): Annual reunion at Weston Mill Oak Villa Club, Camels Head, Plymouth on March 13 commencing at 1200 until later. Guzz submariners, serving and retired, all welcome. For further information contact Alan Jones at turgut.ramegas@hotmail.co.uk or tel: 01752 201583.

HMS Resolution Association: will be carrying out their first reunion at the North Queensferry Hotel near Rosyth over the weekend March 19-21. The ship's company will be conducting its AGM over the weekend as well as a visit to the Rosyth dockyard to pay our respects to the boat and conduct a service for those members who have crossed the bar. Please contact Richard 'Chuck' Berrie at richard@hmsresolution.org.uk or Ron 'Yogi' Baird at chairman@hmsresolution.org.uk or contact the website <http://www.hmsresolution.org.uk> for further details.

APRIL 2010

Loch Class Frigates Association: Reunion takes place at the Royal Court Hotel, Tamworth Road, Keresley, Coventry CV7 8JG, tel: 024 7633 4171 on April 23-26. All members of the association welcome. Membership is open to all who served on any of the Loch-class ships or their variants (Bay class, Admirals Yachts, survey ships and repair ships). Some of these types of ships have their own 'associations' but you can always join both. Please contact Andrew Nunn Hon Sec LCFRA at andrew.nunn@blueyonder.co.uk or tel: 0117 9505835.

HMS Aisne: The last of the Battle class destroyers, a reunion of the last commission 1965 to 1968 is planned for April 24 at the Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth. All ranks, rates and partners welcome. Details of accommodation and dinner from David 'Del' Shannon at dshannon1@live.co.uk or tel: 07770 442004.

HMS Decoy Association: The 23rd annual reunion takes place from April 16 to 18 at the Inglewood Hotel, Torquay. New members of all commissions welcome. Come and claim your 'tot'. For details contact Malcolm 'Dobbo' Dobson at dobbo.exm@btconnect.com or tel: 01502 677395.

HMS Middleton (L74) Association: 26th reunion will be on April 23-24 at the RNA Club, Leamington Spa. All supporters welcome. Details from Mike Alston, 6 Belmont Park Road, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 6HT or tel: 01628 629655.

MAY 2010

HMS Solebay Association: 13th Annual reunion takes place from May 7 to 10 at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. All ex-Solebays, relatives and guests welcome. Details from Malcolm Clarke at malcolm@solebay.org or tel: 0117 962 2500.

North Russia Club: Reunion will take

Deaths

Rear Admiral James Frederick Thomas George Salt CB (always known as Sam). Entered Dartmouth 1958 and after worldwide service in surface ships followed his father into submarines, commanding the diesel-electric Firwhale (1969-71), second-in-command of the Polaris ballistic missile submarine Resolution then the nuclear-powered attack submarine Dreadnought (1978-79). He was captain of the Type 42 guided-missile destroyer HMS Sheffield during the Falklands War when she was hit by an Exocet missile. Although the missile did not explode, its kinetic energy and its unspent fuel created dense smoke and started a fierce fire which quickly raged out of control and with 20 dead and 24 injured he had to order his crew to abandon ship. Several days later Sheffield sank while under tow. Immediately after the Falklands War he commanded another Type 42 destroyer, Southampton. In 1984 he became Assistant Chief of Staff (Operations) at Fleet HQ in Northwood where he managed naval operations worldwide, including deployment to the Persian Gulf and the Falklands, evacuation of British nationals from Lebanon, the clearance of mines in the Red Sea (1985) and surveillance operations against the Soviet Navy at the height of the Cold War. He worked in defence intelligence (1986-87) and as a Rear-Admiral was senior naval member at the Royal College of Defence Studies (1988-90). During the first Gulf War (1990-91) he was Assistant Chief of Naval Staff and was appointed CB. From 1992 to 1997 he was military deputy in Defence Export Services when he retired to become head of marketing for Colebrand Ltd, then director of UK ship sales for Vosper Thornycroft 2001-05. He retained the loyalty of the survivors in the HMS Sheffield Association. December 3. Aged 69.

Capt Robert Green Royal Fleet Auxiliary DSC. Always known as Robin he was educated at the Merchant Navy training school HMS Conway. He went to sea in 1952 as a junior officer in the RFA tanker Eaglesdale. His first captaincy was the tanker Eddyfirth in 1979. As the Commanding Officer of RFA Sir Tristram during the Falklands conflict of 1982, his ship played an important role in supporting the successful San Carlos Bay landings with ammunition, vehicles and stores. Sir Tristram was in Fitzroy Harbour, accompanied by Sir Galahad, when she came under attack by five Skyhawks and was hit with three bombs. Fierce fires raged and casualties were taken. Capt Robin Green managed to master the fires in his ship and assist those abandoning Sir Galahad. He was awarded the DSC for his courage and leadership in carrying his crew through much danger and difficulty. October 5. Aged 74.

The St David was bombed and sunk with the loss of 60 lives while St Andrew and Leinster suffered bomb damage but did not sink.

The light cruiser HMS Delhi is depicted leaving Malta in **Trophy No 23046**, which is a watercolour painting signed by Sidney James, the artist, of her sailing from Malta at some time between the two World Wars.

PO William 'Bill' Laity. At 16 he joined the 15th/19th Hussars but was sent home as he was too young. At 18 and with war looming he joined the Royal Navy. A talented boxer he became Mediterranean Fleet Champion in 1941 and 1942. As a PO, Laity embarked Kashmir which was sunk off Crete in 1941; while waiting over four hours to be rescued he tried to save the life of a fellow sailor. He saw further action in the Mediterranean onboard the destroyer Jackal and was mentioned in dispatches for his efforts to save his ship. He was also involved in actions off North Africa. November 7. Aged 88.

Lt Cdr Brian Reilly. He joined the Royal Navy in 1944 on a scholarship at the age of 13. After training at Dartmouth he served onboard a variety of ships including Illustrious, Wrangler, Bulwark and Hermes. He commanded Parapet in the Persian Gulf. He then transferred to the Fleet Air Arm as an Observer serving in Gannet Squadron and Westland Helicopters in the anti-submarine

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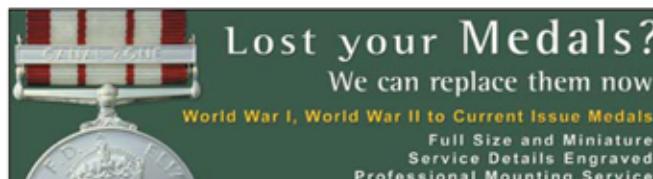
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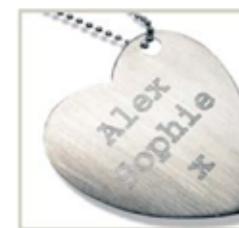
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Cadets join in Year 10 and approximately two-thirds of the pupils in that year group choose the CCF as their optional Friday afternoon activity.

A number of cadets are awarded the much coveted Sixth Form scholarships and eventually some five per cent go on to choose the Armed Forces as their career.

Whilst the benefits of teamwork, leadership, discipline, service and self-reliance in the CCF cannot be over-emphasised, it still has to be said that the cadets have a lot of fun as well as all that marching.

In October the cadets organised a highly successful Charity Afternoon and raised over £800 for the Army and RAF Benevolent funds.

The somewhat questionable military skills involved included the 'Artillery Range' (welly-boot throwing), 'tactical and strategic thinking' (human draughts) and 'marksmanship' (wet sponges thrown at officers in the stocks).

Dr Peter Galley who runs the Army section said that despite the very wet casualties, he was proud of what his cadets had achieved in raising money for such a very worthwhile cause.

Wellington School is also unusual in having a 40-strong Corps of Drums whose musical and marching ability is much in demand at local and regional events.

The Reverend Jeremy Hellier, the School's Chaplain and CCF Commanding Officer said: "We are one of the few Corps of Drums that are left. They were very fashionable, but to find one that's still going and has continued for nearly a hundred years, is rare."

Last year as every year, the CCF's Corps of Drums led the town of Wellington's Remembrance Parade followed by the School's 224 RN, RAF and Army cadets.



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Life's no drag at Perrott Hill School

IT HAS been a very busy term and Perrott Hill has welcomed its largest ever intake of new pupils.

As usual, there has been enormous energy in the classroom, on the games field, in both art and music departments and throughout the wide range of activities on offer. A new Head of Boys' Games and a Director of Music have been welcomed to the school.

There have been many developments to the school premises: the music department has been redecorated, the woods management project is under way (giving increased access for woodland adventure activities) and John Warlow, the Head of Boarding, is overseeing the refurbishment of the boarding houses (assisted by his wife, Sarah, and a hugely supportive staff).

Boarding has become increasingly popular and we now have pressure on boarding places. Perrott Hill is a home from home.

Robert Morse believes the Perrott Hillian phrase "Time and space for a full education" rings as true as ever and the school aims to give every child the opportunity to experience a wide range of



subject matter and activities, safe in the knowledge that they will grow in confidence and develop as individuals.

This term the boys and girls have raised over £3,000 for a number of naval and service charities.

This culminated in the Year 8 helicopter tow at RNAS Yeovilton (towing a Sea King helicopter down the 1.5 mile runway on a Sunday afternoon in November as

pictured above).

One father, who helped organise the event, went off to Afghanistan the next day.

Thanks go to all the Naval personnel who helped on the day.

The school continues to offer means tested bursaries and, in addition, the annual scholarships will take place in February.

Good manners and a love of learning are at the heart of all that Perrott Hill has to offer.

Charity at St John's College

PUPILS from the junior school of St John's College in Southsea have raised over £2,000 for international charity Hope and Homes for Children, during their annual Challenge Event.

Teams of boys and girls aged between four and 11 (some of whom are pictured right) were challenged by teachers to complete a set of practical and educational tasks during a busy and fun morning of activities.

Each pupil was sponsored to complete as many of the challenges as possible and was encouraged to work with others to achieve success.

Tony Shrubsall, Head of the St John's College Junior School said: "The whole event worked really well, the pupils had fun whilst learning, with older pupils supporting their younger team mates.

"We're delighted with the final total raised for Hopes and Homes for Children which we will be supporting throughout the year."



He added: "The charity's latest campaign is to encourage children across the UK to unleash their potential and use their talents to raise money to help vulnerable children in Africa, Eastern and Central Europe."

"The charity works with children, their families and communities to ensure that children grow up in an environment where they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential."

St John's College has supported the charity before and have already planned a series of events for the remainder of the school year including a spring concert and an *X Factor* style talent show.

Perrott Hill
Time and space for a full education



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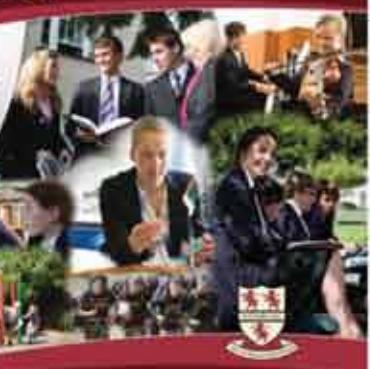
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Open Morning: 21 January 2010, 9:30am - 11:00am

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Duke of York moves towards Academy status

AT THE heart of any good school lie high expectations.

The Duke of York is proud that yet again last summer its pupils enjoyed success both in their GCSEs and A-level results.

Ninety-two per cent of GCSE candidates gained the government's benchmark academic figure of five or more GCSE passes including Mathematics and English.

This is well above the national average for both state and independent education.

A-level results were also very good with 97 per cent of A2 students passing with grades A-E, almost 50 per cent of them achieving passes A-B.

The school was originally

founded in 1801 to take the sons and daughters of soldiers who had died fighting for their country in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

The school moved to Dover in 1909 and it has continued to thrive.

In 1994 girls were re-invited to join the school and it is now a full boarding school for children whose parents are serving in the British Armed Forces.

2010 is going to be a big year for the school as in 2009 a Statement of Intent was made to change the school to Academy status from September 2010.

A dedicated Academy team was set up to move the project

forward in consultation with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and an Expression of Interest was signed by the Education Secretary, Ed Balls, in September 2009.

It is anticipated that the formal declaration will be signed in the spring of 2010.

The Statement of Intent saw the start of a multi-million pound upgrade of the school's boarding

facilities and the build of a new sixth form boarding house.

Work is now well under way with new bath houses being installed into the existing boarding houses and with the new sixth form boarding house which is due to be ready for the September 2010 intake.

See the Duke of York's website www.doyrms.com for up-to-date news.

Aboard with CEA board

ARE you currently, or are you considering, claiming CEA (Board) for your children?

The process for claiming CEA (Board) changed in September 2008 and all new claims for CEA (Board) must adhere to these updated procedures.

The CEA application form has been revised and is now the CEA Eligibility Certificate. This form must be used for all claims with immediate effect. The form can only be obtained by calling the CEAS office.

Maintaining continuity: The aim of Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) is to assist Service personnel to achieve continuity of education for their children that would otherwise be denied in the maintained day school sector if their children accompanied them on frequent assignments both at home and overseas.

Family mobility: Acceptance of accompanied service and hence family mobility is inherent in claiming CEA.

An exception to this requirement is those Service personnel classified as Involuntarily Separated (Involsep).

Naval personnel need to check in particular that their post is classed as Involsep, even if it is a sea-going post.

Further advice on this can be sought from CEAS.

First Steps: Claimants must contact CEAS to obtain the new CEA Eligibility Certificate.

CEAS can offer advice about boarding education and a briefing pack will be sent with a numbered CEA Eligibility Certificate.

The claimant then completes the form including details of their home addresses for their last four assignments.

It must also be signed by the claimant's assignment authority and CO.

The completed form is returned to CEAS with a letter from the chosen school offering their child a place.

Establishing Eligibility: If the Eligibility Certificate shows the Service person as having remained at the same address for their last four assignments, then CEAS will inform the individual's Commanding Officer who will be required to conduct a review of entitlement.

Eligibility must be established every three years after the initial claim and when the child changes school.

Further information can be found in DIN 2008DIN01-191: Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) - Change to regulations JSP 752 Ch 9.

You can ring CEAS on 01980 618244 to discuss this or any other matter relating to the education of Service children.

HAZLEGROVE

2½ ~13



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SERVING FAMILIES IN THE SOUTH WEST

13 ~18

Explore the future at QVS

NOW into the new academic year, Queen Victoria School (QVS) looks back on a summer of activity, and forward to a busy and rewarding new session.

A group of pupils of various ages, and one QVS teacher, undertook an expedition to Malawi this summer, following a similar trip to Peru three years ago.

A combination of exploration, community help and cultural experience means that these trips have a life-changing effect on those who participate.

They also count towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and several pupils are hoping to complete their Gold Award this year – a remarkable achievement for pupils still at school.

Cadet camps have occupied a number of pupils, including a visit to Bisley, the world-famous home of rifle-shooting, to participate in the annual schools' competition there.

Over 20 members of the Pipe Band travelled with staff to Basel in Switzerland in mid-July, to take part in the Tattoo there.

Over several weeks, QVS pipers and drummers played their part in every performance, working alongside professionals from a number of countries including adult musicians from the British Army.

Such experiences are invaluable in developing practice and performance skills, social maturity and a realisation of what professionalism entails.

Following another crop of good exam results – QVS results are consistently above the Scottish national averages – many leavers have headed for university; others have gone on to colleges or to employment.

Around 40 new pupils began their time at QVS in mid-August.

They all have at least one parent who is a Scottish member of the UK Armed Forces or who has served in Scotland.

Fully funded by the Ministry of Defence, QVS provides stability and continuity of education – academically, on the games field and more widely – for children whose family circumstances will typically have seen them move through four or five schools, in different education systems, before coming to QVS at the age of ten.

If you would like to know more about QVS, please contact the Admissions' Secretary on (+44) 0131 310 2927 or visit the website www.qvs.org.uk

Double celebration for Trinity CCF

BOTH the Contingent Commander and the Cadet Cox'n of the RN Section have been honoured by the Lord Lieutenant of Devonshire Capt Eric Dancer RNR.

Lt Cdr (CCF) Geraldine Poulet-Bowden RNR received a Certificate for Meritorious Service 2009. Her citation highlighted the selfless work, leadership, commitment and enthusiasm she gives to the cadets and staff of her CCF Contingent and to the wider national camps and courses run by CCF RN HQ.

Whilst teaching at St Margaret's School, Exeter, in the early 1990s she set up one of the first UK girls' school Combined Cadet Force units, becoming its Contingent Commander and leading it to much success.

Having moved to Trinity School, Teignmouth, she revitalised the moribund RN section before becoming Contingent Commander in April 2008.

Both Army and Navy cadets have since had many opportunities to experience naval life, through visits to and passages on the unit's affiliated ship HMS Albion and RN courses.

Cadet Cox'n Alexandra

Turner is an Upper Sixth Former at Trinity studying Physics, Chemistry and Biology, having achieved 14 GCSE A or A* grades including four As in the BTEC Public Services gained through CCF.

She joined CCF in Year 9 and took to the RN section like the proverbial 'duck to water'.

Alex has attended many camps and courses organised by CCF RN HQ including an annual visit to HMS Raleigh to improve her dinghy sailing skills at Jupiter Point, a leadership weekend at HMS Collingwood and subsequently the leadership week for which she was rewarded with a certificate from the Royal Navy Leadership and Management School.

In August 2008 Alex attended the CCF Summer Camp at BRNC Dartmouth and was selected to lead her Division.

In August 2009 she returned to BRNC but this time as a member of the newly-formed CCF Band which will take part in the Cadet 150 celebrations next year.

For her 'outstanding service in the Cadet Force of the County', Alex has been appointed the CCF Lord Lieutenant's Cadet for Devon 2009.

Diversify with Kelly College

KELLY College, founded by Admiral Kelly in 1877, is proud of its 130 years of service to the Royal Navy.

Kelly is situated in the beautiful south-west of England and offers a co-educational full and weekly boarding, and day education for pupils aged 11-18. It is a school of 360 pupils of whom half are boarders.

Kelly offers all the facilities of a larger school, while retaining the advantages in the individual care and class size of a smaller school.

The Preparatory School is co-educational and has a further 190 pupils aged 2½-11 years. The Prep School shares many of the facilities of the senior school including boarding from Year 5.

Kelly provides a high-quality, well-balanced education with a strong commitment to a whole range of extracurricular activities. The staff are fully involved seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Kelly enjoys a reputation for excellent academic results (98.5 per cent pass rate at A-level, with 59 per cent at grades A and B in 2009) and for its cultural and sporting achievements.

The sporting record of the school is very strong; Kelly has a national reputation in swimming,

rugby and athletics, while hockey and netball teams have achieved county and regional success.

At the same time, Kelly is particularly proud of its music and drama.

One of Kelly's strengths is the range and diversity of its societies and activities – with dozens to choose from there is something for everyone to enjoy.

The school aims to nurture the academic potential of all pupils. In recent years, every leaver who has wished to proceed to Higher Education has done so.

Small class sizes ensure individual attention and a committed staff seek to work with parents to achieve the personal goals of each pupil, whether that be a place at a top university, international sporting representation, or a chosen career.

Entry to the Senior School is by examination and/or interview at 11+, 13+ and at Sixth Form level. Scholarships are available at all age groups and full details are available from the Registrar.

For further information about bursaries or to arrange a visit, please contact the Registrar, Candace Greensted, on 01822 813100, 01822 612050 (fax) or admissions@kellycollege.com.

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Founded by Admiral Kelly in 1877- celebrating 130 years of service to Naval families

Creative drama at Queen's College

SCHOOLS are now so well-inspected and so transparent in their dealings with parents that families can almost take it for granted that all of the 300 or so HMC boarding schools will do a competent job getting their children through their GCSEs and A-levels and letting them play the major sports.

It's a bit similar to the motor industry. Modern cars are so good that consumers can now take it for granted that they will be reliable, economical and comfortable.

Whether you buy a Ford or a VW comes down to the detail and individual preferences.

More and more, choices over schools comes down to specialisms.

Queen's College has spent many years developing an outstanding reputation in the visual and performing arts.

It mounts school plays that local critics regard as near professional standard, the annual Quartz visual arts festival draws thousands of visitors to see paintings and sculpture, and the choral music is outstanding.

"What this represents is an emphasis on creativity," explained headmaster Chris Alcock.

"Very few of our Sixth Form leavers go on to become painters or actors, they're more likely to be doctors of lawyers quite honestly. But if you can give them the encouragement and freedom to think creatively, that's a gift for life."

For Service families who inevitably lead peripatetic lives, often based hours from the big cities, it can be difficult to give children the exposure to cultural events – whether it is plays or galleries – that so enrich a

teenager's education.

Queen's has a well-run programme of excursions and expeditions to events in London, Bristol and Bath.

Within school, being part of a large demanding production team – cast or technical – for a major play can often teach more about teamwork than large amounts of CCF or DoE. Recent shows have ranged from *My Fair Lady* to a heavy-metal version of *Macbeth* (see picture right).



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For further details and an application form, visit www.qvs.org.uk



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Around the units

FOLLOWING their success at the Corps National Combined Regatta in the summer, Stonehaven unit has won the Northern Area .22 Montrose Shoot competition for the first time.

Edinburgh and Clyde South Districts were joint runners-up.

The Stonehaven team, representing Grampian District, competed against cadets from throughout the Northern Area – Scotland and Northern England – in the competition at HMS Caledonia.

The cadets in the team were Kerri Johnston, Michael Smith and Jordan Rash, and they were coached by unit First Lieutenant Sean Fraser. Jordan was also adjudged to be top shot on the day.

RUISLIP unit chaplain Chris Hall has been installed in the post of area chaplain for London.

The ceremony took place before the Ruislip AGM, and the evening also saw a number of awards being made.

Unit president Capt Dick Strange handed awards to Cdt Charlotte Smith (Attendance and Bearing); Cdt Danielle Bates (CO's Trophy); Cdt Jessica Smith (Cadet of the Year, Junior); AC Kayleigh Hodges (Cadet of the Year, Senior); Mne Cdt 2nd Class Sam Khan (Marine Cadet of the Year); Cdt Guinevere Nicholls (Admiral Foster Trophy).

GREAT Yarmouth cadets had the chance to showcase their talents for defence minister Kevan Jones.

The Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans was met by Officer-in-Charge PO (SCC) Graeme Richardson and a Sea Cadet guard of honour.

He met cadets and staff at the recently-renovated unit, presenting them with their first burgee.

The occasion was also used by the local Royal British Legion to launch their Poppy Appeal.

PO Richardson said: "It was a great honour to have such an important visitor, and to host the launch of the Poppy Appeal."

IN THE early hours of a winter Tuesday morning CPO Alan Bell, the officer-in-charge of **New Romney** unit, was driving his pregnant daughter-in-law 20 miles to Ashford Hospital when he had to make an emergency stop.

While his son made a 999 call, Alan delivered his baby granddaughter in the back of his car.

Mother and daughter – Lola – continued the 15 miles to hospital by ambulance and both are doing well.

Port Talbot youngsters on duty

LT (SCC) Thomas RNR, the CO of Port Talbot unit, PO Summerfield, the unit First Lieutenant, POC Summerfield, LC Twomey, AC Thomas and AC Summerfield were all drafted in to help launch the Poppy Appeal in West Glamorgan.

Two cadets from the unit also provided a ceremonial guard at the Cenotaph at Taibach Memorial Park for Remembrance Sunday.

Barrow group enjoy the Rock

MORE than 30 members of Barrow unit made a week-long visit to Gibraltar for their annual camp.

The 34 cadets and staff were guests of the Maritime Naval Operations centre on the Rock.

A full programme of activities included a 2½-mile tour of the tunnels – a fraction of the 34 miles or so which honeycomb the Rock.

The unit also managed to get in some dinghy sailing and power boating, while a boat trip off the Atlantic coast allowed them to get a close look at a school of dolphins.

For Sunday service at the King's Chapel the cadets donned their tropical whites.

And no trip to Gibraltar is complete without a cable car ride to the top to see the Barbary Apes and to admire the views over the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

Unit CO Lt (SCC) Ted Creighton RNR said: "This is the fourth time the Barrow unit has visited Gibraltar in the past 20 years and this was just as successful as all of the other camps."

Essex units take Choisin Cup

STAFF and cadets across Essex district look forward to the Choisin Cup competition – and their anticipation was rewarded with a comprehensive win.

The competition, at Pippingford Park training area in East Sussex, tests teamwork, determination and leadership in a series of

adventurous challenges over a weekend.

Stances tested such skills as seamanship, first aid, initiative, camp craft and archery.

Teams have to be self-sufficient in the field, to navigate between stances, including a nighttime switch of camp which included a canoe crossing of a lake.

Among the participants was London Area Officer Cdr Paul Haines, who got stuck into the activities around the park.

The icing on the cake was the final result.

Essex District took first, second and third places in the form of Hornchurch, Harlow and Walton respectively.

Malta GC salutes heroes of Taranto

MALTA GC unit wardroom held an informal 'at home' wine reception on the main deck to celebrate Taranto Night.

The evening started with a small private ceremony before the guests arrived, at which a flying helmet presented to TS St Paul by 815 Naval Air Squadron was placed on a pedestal, with the 815 badge beside it.

The *Still* was then piped, followed by the order "Attention on deck, face aft and salute the helmet."

Officers and staff took the salute as all the names of 815 members written on the helmet – presented by squadron CO Cdr Paul Bowers during Taranto Night 2008 – were read out by LC Maruska D'Amato.

When the guests arrived they were served Italian wines (to honour the enemy) and canapés by cadets in half-blues acting as stewards for the evening.

At two minutes to eleven, Mne Cpl Rebecca Cavlan piped the *Still* and two minutes' silence was observed to honour the 42 pilots and observers who took part in Operation Judgement.

Mess president Sgt Owen Farrugia then addressed the guests and invited unit chairman Lt (SCC) James Davis RNR (Retd) to reflect on Taranto and other matters, including the honour felt within the unit at the presentation of the flying helmet, representing the affiliation between Malta GC and 815 NAS, one of the squadrons involved in the Battle of Taranto.

He then went on to talk of the significance of the raid, when Fleet Air Arm Swordfish aircraft launched from HMS Illustrious torpedoed and bombed the Italian fleet at Taranto, destroying one battleship and damaging two more.

Lt Davis said: "The helmet embodies the spirit and ethos of the men and women of the Fleet Air Arm, namely 815 NAS to whom we are affiliated by friendship as Sea Cadets and by history as Maltese."

"It is for us a great honour to salute it, for in so doing we are paying tribute to those intrepid 815 flyers, especially those that



● The 815 NAS flying helmet is saluted during a ceremony before a Taranto Night reception in Malta

during World War 2 fought over the skies of Malta."

The Mess President then invited POC Dylan Darmanin and Cadet Sgt Zerafa, both of whom are in the process of joining the Royal Navy, and Sgt (SCC) Rene Aquilina, who has now resigned to become an Officer Cadet in the Armed Forces of Malta, to join him so that they would receive the applause of those gathered.

Officer in Command Lt (SCC) Donald Montebello RMR thanked Capt Jonathan Borg of the Armed Forces of Malta for attending –

Capt Borg is the officer-in-charge of the new Officer Cadets under whom OC Aquilina is training.

The unit presented Capt Borg with a unit badge, which was reciprocated by Capt Borg presenting an AFM crest to the unit wardroom.

After the toasts came mess games, which have now become legendary in their innovation thanks to the usual multi-talented quartet – unit deputy chairman Daniel Vella, unit treasurer Anna Vella, Sgt (SCC) Aquilina and mess president Sgt (SCC) Owen Farrugia.

Welsh teams take challenge



● North Wales cadets on the Crogan Challenge

NORTH WALES cadets joined colleagues from the Army, RAF police and fire brigade to test themselves in a new competition.

The Crogan Challenge brought together various cadet forces at the invitation of the High Sheriff of Clwyd, Maj Henry Robertson.

There were five tests – the high rope, which needed the cadets to walk across a rope bridge while blindfolded and to trust their guide to get them across; the swamp crossing, for which they had to use planks and tree stumps to get their team across; the trailer pull, in which they had to pull a trailer through an obstacle course; crossing the river by building a rope bridge; and finally, the river rescue – building a raft using barrels, ropes and planks to transport a casualty to the other side.

Though tired at the end the participants never lost their enthusiasm nor their smiles – some even asked to return for the next challenge.

New powerboat for TS Sovereign



BARROW unit has taken possession of its new 21ft powerboat.

The vessel features an inboard engine, an enclosed wheelhouse and forward cabin, sea toilet, sink and chart table, making it ideal for use in coastal waters to support sailing and other craft.

Extras include an electric windlass, an eight-man liferaft and a road trailer.

The boat was paid for through one significant donation – £32,000 from the Fisher Foundation – and completes a major upgrade to our fleet for which our Unit Management Committee have been working tirelessly on raising funds, and the Sea Cadets of the Barrow unit find themselves extremely fortunate for having such a magnificent capability to serve their training needs."

The three-year programme has seen investment of more than £60,000 and

covers the removal of a motor whaler, Viking, Bosun and three Toppers and the acquisition of two new motor RIBs, the new 21ft motor boat, six Laser Picos and a Laser Bahia.

The boat was handed over to unit chairman John Hornby by the donors at the unit's sailing centre.

CO Lt (SCC) Ted Creighton RNR said: "The 21ft motor boat is a significant acquisition that completes a major upgrade to our fleet for which our Unit Management Committee have been working tirelessly on raising funds, and the Sea Cadets of the Barrow unit find themselves extremely fortunate for having such a magnificent capability to serve their training needs."



Cross-Channel destroyer

ELIZABETH College RN CCF cadets and members of Guernsey unit TS Sarnia sailed with HMS Daring on an overnight trip from Portsmouth to the Channel Islands.

Before they sailed they took in some Royal Navy history at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, then switched to the present when they went aboard the state-of-the-art destroyer.

While on board the cadets were split into two groups so that they could tour the ship and become involved in a number of activities.

These included a man overboard exercise, chart work exercises, steering the ship and dressing up in full fire-fighting suits complete with breathing apparatus (see above).

A number of cadets are considering a career in the Royal Navy, so the visit gave them an idea of life on board a warship, and the chance to talk to the ship's company to get an inside view.

They were about to take part in a flight deck sports session with the Type 45's clubswinger when they were called to see the ship's CO, Capt Paddy McAlpine, who addressed the group and presented them with large framed photos of Daring.

Lt Cdr Angus Essenhain organised the visit, and S/Lt Kim Smith helped supervise the groups on board.

Broads cash for staff

UNIFORMED staff PO Tony Easter and PO Dean Harrington were congratulated by John Ash of the Broads Authority after completing their UKCC Level 1 coaches course in canoe/kayak – gaining excellent qualifications to coach the cadets in their charge.

The course was conducted over several weeks with small courses in safety and rescue finishing off with two long weekends to complete the qualification.

This project was supported by the Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund with a grant of £988, which means cadets will be able to be coached towards more qualifications in canoes and kayaks from their unit near Beccles Quay.

Oceanic adventure

CADETS from two Bristol units were granted a rare opportunity to spend a week aboard helicopter carrier HMS Ocean.

The Avonmouth and Bristol (Adventure) cadets joined around 60 others from around the UK in Devonport to sail with Ocean to Jersey.

Avonmouth CO Lt (SCC) Barbara Hiller RNR said: "These events are important to the cadets as it gives them a chance to demonstrate what they have learned and see the origins of their training."

"As always the cadets were a credit to themselves and the unit."



● OC Emily Buchanan

Emily flies the flag on parade

OC EMILY Buchanan flew the flag for Aldeburgh and District RNA when she acted as standard bearer at the annual East Anglia District Trafalgar Day parade (see above).

Emily (12), of Beccles unit, found the experience different to parading with other members of her unit who were also on parade.

The cadet comes from a family who have a history of being members of the Beccles unit.

Her brother, L/Cpl Nathan Buchanan, is a former cadet who is at present serving with 45 Commando in Norway.

Appeal launched for Royalist's successor

THE SEA Cadet Corps has launched a £7.5 million appeal to build a replacement for TS Royalist.

TV historian Dan Snow, himself a former Sea Cadet, announced the start of the campaign for a new brig during a reception at Trinity House in London.

The current sail training ship was built in 1971, and the charity needs to replace her in the near future if it is to continue to offer teenagers the opportunity for adventurous training at sea.

During her 38 years Royalist has given more than 30,000 young people and staff the chance to try their hand at sailing a traditional ship at sea.

Dan Snow was one of the most recent to sail with her, during filming for his new series on BBC2, *Empire of the Seas*.

"You join the Sea Cadets and you push your own limits," said Dan.

"You discover things about yourself. It opens up options."

The current cadre is in agreement.

Josh Syrett (17), a member of the Colchester unit, said: "Sailing on Royalist is an incredible experience open to all Sea Cadets.

"It's what we are all about,

and teaches you team work, perseverance and determination.

"It is an exhilarating experience and an amazing challenge.

"A new training ship will mean even more young people can benefit from this incredible experience."

The new ship's specifications will result in a tall ship with an operating life of some 25 years, taking more than 20,000 cadets and around 3,000 adults to sea for an average voyage of six days each.

She will be almost 29m long and 6.7m at the beam – very similar to the ship she will replace.

The new version will have two diesel engines and twin propellers for cruising at seven knots.

She will displace some 150 tonnes and under sail should be capable of 12 knots.

She will be based in Portsmouth Harbour at the Petrol Pier at Gosport and undertake 35 cadet voyages each year.

Each voyage will have room for 24 cadets, plus two volunteer watch officers.

She will tend to operate around the UK coast, but will also undertake expeditionary cruises to the "near continent".

She will operate with a permanent crew of six, including a sailing master.

● **Josh Syrett, of Colchester unit, meets Dan Snow**



Celebration and farewell at St Albans

ST ALBANS cadets celebrated another year of success at their annual general meeting – but also said goodbye to their Commanding Officer.

Lt Cdr (SCC) Graham Waylett RNR, has stood down after another two years leading the unit, having stood in on a temporary basis for a couple of months.

He has now handed over command to Lt Cdr (SCC) David Nice RNR.

Attended by Deputy Mayor Cllr Mohammad Iqbal Zia, the ceremony was part of the unit's annual meeting which saw the cadets celebrating another year of success and growth.

The unit was also presented with a pennant by District Officer Lt Cdr Margaret Coates, recognising the unit's place as one of the best in Hertfordshire.

Commenting on the handover, Lt Cdr Nice said: "Graham will be a hard act to follow, and will be greatly missed by all, but we have the staff and cadets in place to allow the unit to grow and develop.

"We have already started work on refurbishing the unit and we are looking forward to a positive year ahead with lots of positive plans in place."

Cadets were also presented with awards on the night for individual achievement including:

Best Junior Cadet: Junior Cadet Max August; Best Dressed Cadet: Marine Cpl Steven Buck; Churchill Cup for leadership skills: LC George Threadgold; Paddle sport (for reaching national kayak final): Marine L/Cpl Ben Lansdown; Gosling Cup for drill: AC Jake Hughes; Piping Award: OC Kim Wood.

The Fred Nash Award for best instructor, as voted for by the unit's instructors, went to PO Ted Hill.

Largo is the key for Barnsley

NOW in its 67th year, Barnsley unit is still proving a popular draw for youngsters in the town.

In the early days the unit – which opened its doors for the first time on September 1 1942 – was only open to boys; many went on to join the Royal Navy, and those who were communicators earned a bounty for the unit.

Units now have to raise their own funds, and Legal and Receivables, trading as Largo at Silkwood Business Park in Wakefield, arranged a charity ball at the Met Hotel in Leeds to help raise vital funds.

TS Diomede staff and cadets passed on their thanks to Largo for their efforts, and urged anyone else who would like to help the unit flourish to get in touch with CO CPO (SCC) Caroline Devonport at co@barnsleyseacadets.co.uk, tel 01977 652880.

Support your Sea Cadets

Volunteer, donate or even leave a legacy.

We need you:
get inspired at www.sea-cadets.org
or call us on 020 7654 7000.



Luke backs CVQO appeal

DANNII Minogue helped the Duke of Westminster to launch a £2 million fundraising appeal by the educational charity Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation at the Cavalry and Guards Club in London.

Huyton with Roby cadet Luke Finnigan rubbed shoulders with the likes of Lorraine Kelly and Joanna Lumley at the event as he explained to the media how the Corps had helped him.

"I have achieved more in the past year

than I have my entire life," he said.

"Not only have I gained internationally-recognised qualifications, I have also managed to stay on the right side of the law thanks to Cadets and CVQO."

CVQO aims to extend the help it can give to young people to reach their full potential – there are believed to be more than 2,000 eligible cadets who want to earn extra qualifications but who are excluded through lack of funding.

30 out of 30 for the specialists

ALL 30 cadets, who attended the Manchester District multi-subject specialisation weekend at TS Quantock – Tameside unit – achieved at least a pass in their chosen subject.

The cadets, who came from Manchester (Trafalgar), Salford, Stockport, Stretford and Tameside units, and ranged in age from Junior Cadets to Able Cadets, were given the opportunity to attain a Class Three specialisation in either Communications, Cook/Steward, First-Aid, Seamanship (Chartwork) or Seamanship (Ropework & Rigging).

As the pass rate shows, the cadets all worked extremely hard and their determination to succeed paid off.



● Cadets settle down in their accommodation on board HMS Cavalier

A Cavalier approach to history

KENT cadets have been testing the accommodation on board wartime destroyer HMS Cavalier in Chatham Historic Dockyard.

Support from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council has allowed the dockyard trust to adapt the aft end of the old ship, including a specially-designed suite for wheelchair users and those with mobility difficulties.

The renovated compartments can be used for day visits or overnight stays.

In particular, the new facility presents an opportunity to further support the Sea Cadets in their education and training.

An evening reception was arranged by the trust, in partnership with the Kent branch of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets, to promote the facility.

A charity registered in England & Wales 313013 and in Scotland SC037808



● The second TS Warspite, formerly HMS Conqueror



● The third TS Warspite, former cruiser HMS Hermione



● The third TS Warspite dressed overall

Spirit of Warspite lives on

SEA Cadets are familiar with the concept of training ships – each unit, after all, is identified by its location and by the name of its TS.

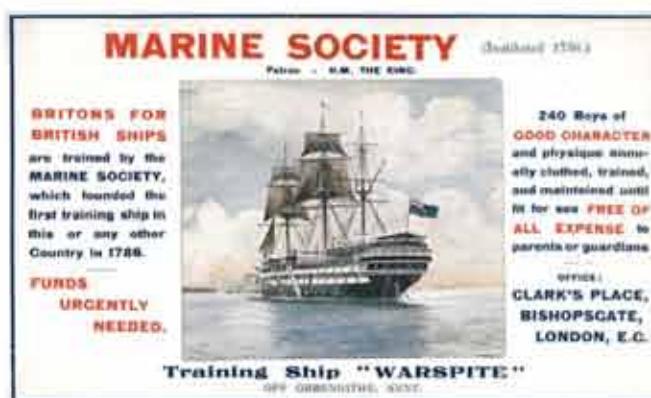
The TS prefix harks back to the days of the 'wooden walls', when the hulls of worn-out warships were moored in sheltered waters, harbours and rivers, to provide floating schools for boys.

And although the Marine Society, parent organisation of the Sea Cadets, ran such establishments as long ago as the 18th century, there are still those who form a living link with the era of training ships.

The Marine Society was established in 1756 to support the Royal Navy and the merchant fleet by training destitute young boys for a career at sea.

That requirement continued well into the 19th Century, and in 1856 the Society established a school in the former 3rd Rate HMS Warspite, built at Chatham in 1807 as a 74-gun ship.

In 1840 she was refitted as a 4th rate 50-gun frigate, and within a couple of decades she had been turned into a training



ship at permanent moorings off Greenwich on the Thames.

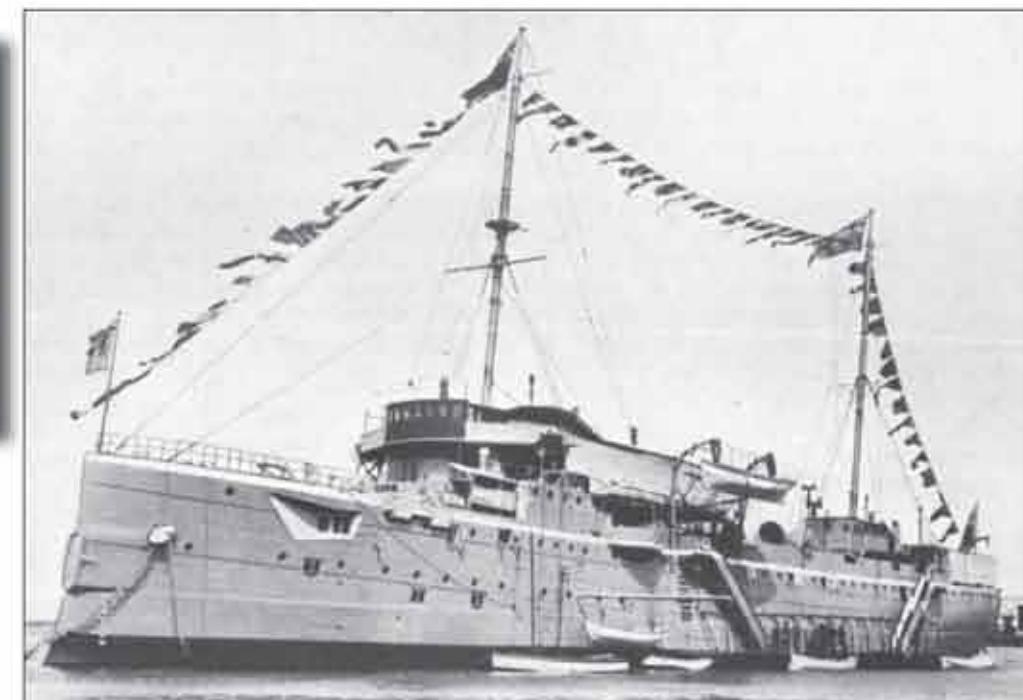
Wear and tear meant that the old ship had to be replaced in the mid-1870s by the converted steam-powered two-decker Conqueror, formerly the 120-gun HMS Waterloo, which was renamed Warspite in 1876.

That ship was destroyed by fire in 1918 and the school was re-established in an old Astraea-class cruiser Hermione, renamed Warspite in 1922 – which was moored off Grays in Essex.



● (Above) TS Warspite's drum and fife band pictured around 1900 – notice the bare feet, a common situation at the time

● (Below) Former Warspite Boys gather on board HMS Lord Nelson in Constantinople in 1919



● A closer look at the third TS Warspite on the Thames off Greenwich

and set themselves up as seamen.

Warspite could support around 300 boys at any one time, each having signed an indenture which essentially handed them over to the care of the charity and saw them committed to joining one of the maritime services.

Although it was thought it might be the last such get-together, their time in Warspite obviously did them no harm as the quartet were of the opinion 'never say never'.

The men

would have recalled the sparse regime on board such training ships, as well as the mix of backgrounds of the boys themselves.

Warspite Boys may have been sash-line makers or rope spinners, French polishers, butchers' errand boys, maybe even hawkers' assistants.

Some came to Warspite from schools, and a few had been apprenticed, but if they had a trade they were only loosely connected with it.

The Marine Society offered them the chance to learn a trade

between 1862 and 1907 the Marine Society contributed 3,689 boys to the Royal Navy and 9,928 to the merchant service.

A typical daily routine for a Warspite Boy would begin at 5.30am, and the day would be split between traditional schoolwork and seamanship, the emphasis in the latter being on keeping the ship clean and the boys fit.

They enjoyed a half-holiday on Friday afternoons, but Saturday was generally spent scrubbing the whole ship, while drill was practised every Tuesday and Wednesday.

A church service was observed every Sunday morning.

On arrival at Warspite every boy received an outfit of two blue serge jerkins, a guernsey, two pairs of trousers, cotton shirts, worsted socks, boots, a silk handkerchief, three caps, and a towel, all of which was stowed in a painted canvas sack.

They also got a hammock, toothbrush, clothes brush and mending materials to keep their kit neat and tidy.

The only real qualification for entry was to be of good character (especially honest), and after six months training they could be discharged for service at any time.

Some were sent to cookery school at the London School of Nautical Cookery.

Even in its final years life in Warspite was spartan.

Philip Okill chose to leave school and join Warspite, not knowing that the training ship had the

reputation of being for orphans (officer cadets were trained on the Worcester, also on the Thames).

Young Philip and his colleagues were turfed out of their hammocks every morning at 5.30am for a cold shower, and could take little comfort from breakfast (or any other meal, for that matter).

Philip described the food as "adequate, but monotonous" and recalled one of the hazards of working with one of the ship's cooks, who was considered eccentric.

"If one was assigned duty to help in the galley one had to be aware of his frequent outbursts of temper which might result in a large pot of soup being hurled to the deck, only to be cleaned up by the cook's boy."

Activities for the boys included swimming, boxing, cross-country running and boat-work (Warspite teams were regular participants in local regattas), while there were plenty of parades and inspections.

And apart from nautical skills, which included knots and splices and basic navigation techniques, the general education provided was up to matriculation standard.

Life on board was tough but not unpleasant, in Mr Okill's eyes.

"I got on well with the other lads and our dissimilar backgrounds

were not a problem," said Philip.

"I was lucky enough to hit the ship's bully hard enough in the boxing ring to wind him and he never afterwards picked on me while it made me popular with the other boys.

"Of course, we were all in uniform and all lived under the same regime, so there were no differences.

"This produced good camaraderie and we learned to stand up for ourselves and while things were tough, there was never any cruelty and for the most part everyone was very decent."

The name Warspite still lives on in the Sea Cadet Corps today.

Besides the training ship of Newton-le-Willows unit, the Marine Society continues to fund a mini Warspite at the London Nautical College, and pays the running costs for a boat used by pupils and Sea Cadets alike.

It is based at the Sea Cadet boat station at Royal Victoria Docks, close to the ExCeL centre, though the craft belongs to the school.

This Warspite is useful in a number of roles; she was race control boat for the London Youth Games, is used for adult instructor courses and as a tug and general support boat during training.



● Warspite Boys training on the deck of their ship around 1900

ISIN, but no cake



FROM its beginnings in 1976, the Inter-Services Indoor Hockey competition (ISIN) has evolved into a nine-match event with each game split into 20-minute halves with a five-minute breather in between.

Only six of the RN's 13-strong U23 squad were able to attend the training session before their clash with the RAF – and it showed. Luckily, the RAF were also all at sea, so it took a while for the match to get going.

When it did, Lee Milton gave the RN the lead, followed by strikes from Richard Green, Nick Tate and Callum Watkins.

A stronger second-half performance saw the RAF pulled back to within two goals at 5-3 before Mne Jim Ewing closed the scoring to seal a 6-3 RN victory.

It's been 21 years since the Navy women have lifted the ISIN title. And 2009 continued that barren spell, sadly, although the ladies put a spirited fight against the RAF.

A series of stray RN passes – and Air Force interceptions – gave the Crabs a 6-2 lead at the break. Yet with just three minutes on the clock, the Senior Service had pulled scores back to 7-6.

It was as close as they were going to get, however. Two late scores killed the game and the RAF ran out 9-6 winners – but observers reckoned the RN Ladies put in their best performance in more than two decades.

The RN-RAF senior sides brought the first session to an end. The Navy had won the title for three years running, with the Air Force lagging far behind.

But not in 2009: the Navy lacked some first-choice players and then missed a number of early chances. Indeed, despite the RN dominating the first period, the two sides went in at the break tied at 2-2.

Yet more missed opportunities in the second period led to an increasingly wound-up RN side, while the RAF built up a 6-4 lead. Navy protests

eventually led to the skipper being suspended – the third time in the past three years that the side had ended a game a man down.

After a 12-3 triumph for the Army U23 over their RAF counterparts, the RN were back on court in the shape of the ladies up against the soldiers.

The result was a bit of a drubbing: 11-1. PO(AEA) Kate Newcombe was the only sailor to get on the scoresheet in a game described as the ISIN equivalent of Arsenal vs Gosport.

The clash of Army and RN men was a far closer affair – although a slew of wasted chances ensured they were 6-2 down with six minutes to play. A late fight-back clawed the score to 6-5, but time ran out. The three-year run of ISIN titles was over.

The Army-RN U23 brought the Senior Service involvement in the tournament to a close and was a low-scoring encounter thanks to two very strong defences. Matt Balcombe got on the scoresheet for the Navy – the only sailor to do so as his side went down 3-1 and the soldiers won the U23 championship.

In the deciding ladies match, the Army overcame the RAF 8-5 to take the title, while the RAF and Army men served out a 6-6 thriller. Goal difference ensured the team in light blue lifted the ISIN trophy.

Still, at least the Royal Navy had something to cheer in the Inter-Services Inter-Command tournament between the six best sides in Forces hockey.

Naval Air Command and RM flew the flag for the Senior Service.

Both made it to the semi-finals after the group stages. The Royals bowed out at the hands of the aviators, 6-4, but defeated RAF North to take the plate.

The fliers continued their winning streak with a 6-3 victory in the final over the Royal Logistics Corps.

Both finalists were due to attend the West of England finals in Bath as *Navy News* went to press.

● PO(AEA) Kate Newcombe (RNNS Yeovilton) brings the ball forward in the 11-1 defeat to the Army, watched by RN keeper Lt Cdr Cathy Lacey (HMS Collingwood)

Picture: Lt Col Charles Jackman

NOTICEBOARD

1970 1980 1990 THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

We flick back through the pages of *Navy News* to see which stories were drawing attention in past decades...

January 1970

IT is not often you see a submarine officer in best uniform, including his hat, on horseback and *Navy News* thought so too when it printed an action shot of Lt Edwin Atkinson astride a thoroughbred horse, successfully clearing a difficult competition jump. (Sadly no print available – Ed.)

A rider of some renown, Lt Atkinson was then serving in HMS Otus, having joined BRNC Dartmouth in 1962. By 1965 he had taken part in six international events and even won some of them. As a member of the RN Saddle Club, he ran the RN show-jumping team; to their credit they managed to win the Queen's Plate three years in succession at the inter-service championships held at Windsor.

January 1980

PREVENTING the tragic flow of illegal immigrants into Hong Kong who were aiming for a better life in the then British Colony, both from China and increasingly from Vietnam, was the job of the Royal Navy.

The Hong Kong Squadron (some of whom are pictured right) patrolled at sea using a series of ageing vessels, such as HMS Monckton and a variety of smaller craft, including RM rigid raiders and the fast patrol boat HMS Scimitar.

There was also the land border to protect and that was being done at the time by 42 Commando RM, but they also had the added task of keeping an eye on the Chinese Army, who were patrolling on their side of the border. The seven km of unfenced border the RMs looked after became known as 42 Street.

The illegal immigrants made the journey often in pitiful, makeshift, unseaworthy craft or they swam the nearly 20 miles using inadequate buoyancy devices. Most escape attempts happened under the cover of darkness, but hundreds were caught a day. One month in 1979 saw 14,000 men, women and children passed back to the civilian police; this often meant punishment when they were finally returned to China, but many still tried again and again.

The Naval personnel found it emotionally draining but important work.



January 1990

IT was announced that three more Duke-class ships had been ordered, this time from the Swan Hunter yard and they would take four years to fully build and commission. The names chosen were HMS Westminster, Northumberland and Richmond.

HMS Norfolk had been commissioned the year before, so all in all there would be nine of these anti-submarine frigates, either being built or on order. It was agreed at the time that putting the builds out to competitive tender amongst the commercial shipyards had underlined the benefits of ordering in batches.

NAVY NEWS

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● Lt Kirsty Archibald fends off the unwanted attention of two RN men during the Inter-Service canoe polo championships

Picture: CPOETWE Daniel Patten

Ladies reclaim canoe polo title

THE RN Ladies swept (and paddled) to victory at the Inter-Service **canoe polo** championships at HMS Temeraire.

After 2008's defeat to the Army, the team were out for revenge – fielding their strongest side in more than a decade.

Canoe polo is a fast aggressive game – usually played in a pool – with five players on each side.

Buoyancy aids and helmets with face guards are worn for protection, as tackling a player can involve some 'contact' and often results in capsizing the opposing player to retrieve the ball.

In 2008, the Army achieved a clean sweep, winning not only the individual team events for both men and women, but also the Inter-Service trophy as overall winners – the first time the Navy had lost this event in 13 years.

Lt Helen Coxon lead a team of strong experienced players, that included a new entrant at Dartmouth and a PO PTI who was representing the RN at Polo for the first time.

The team not only won the ladies event, but also managed to draw with the RAF Men's A team – something which not even the Navy men's B team achieved.

Unfortunately the RN were unable to field two full men's teams, leading to a difficult choice of handing over the trophy to the Army before the competition began or reducing the Men's A Team to only four players, and augmenting the Men's B team with one of the ladies. In fine Senior Service tradition, the two sides gave them a fight.

As seems to be the case every year in this closely-fought competition, it all came down to the last game: Lt Matt Twisleton captained the RN A against the Army A, led by Capt Benn Kerr-Shaw.

Despite the Navy's depleted numbers it was all square at half time with two goals apiece and the Navy dominating play.

The RN then took the lead early in the second half, raising hopes of a victory against the odds.

Unfortunately the Army came back and, despite a brave battle by the Navy, snatched victory in the dying minutes to win 4-3 and take not only the individual team event, but also the Inter-Service trophy.

Gig gong goes to Culdrose

A TEAM from RNAS Culdrose took the Inter-Service gig rowing title in Dartmouth, fighting off (not literally) the RAF, Raleigh and BRNC.

Dartmouth hosted the race, but it was the Cornish air station team who got off to a good start and held a convincing lead all the way to the line – despite one of the crew rowing on the non preferred side of the gig.

After a brief stop for refreshments the teams mixed crews for the return leg.

A mixed crew of three Culdrose personnel-three RAF crossed the line in first place on that return journey.

The air station's team is now in training for the gig world championships held off the Isles of Scilly.



● Lt Cdr Al Bernard (front, UKHO), L/Cpl Carl Edwards (goalie, SFSG) and Mne Cameron (rear, UKFL CSG) defend the RN net in the 4-2 defeat to the RAF in Dundee

Kayaks' Needles work

PADDLING in the shadow of the unmistakeable outline of the Needles, these are 'delegates' of the first RN/RM sea kayak symposium.

The aim was to give RN and RM paddlers the British Canoe Union qualifications which will allow them to develop as potential sea kayak expedition leaders and coaches, writes WO2 'Batch' Bachelor RM.

The sport is an approved adventure training activity, but it suffers from a severe lack of qualified coaches and leaders throughout the Forces – and in the RN and RM in particular.

This is a crying shame, as most RN and RM bases are close to the sea, making it an activity that is easily accessible and also extremely cheap compared to sailing. And – just like sailing – sea kayaking provides a way of delivering basic seamanship knowledge, expedition planning, navigation by map and charts, along with all the other aims of adventure training: teamwork, courage, leadership, physical and mental endurance etc.

It was amazing to hear how many people wanted to develop as sea kayakers but just couldn't find the time due to work commitments.

In the end, 16 paddlers volunteered to be 'students' on the symposium.

The courses delivered included: two JS Sea Kayak Progression groups (BCU Four-star Leader Training & Assessment and BCU 3 Star Sea Kayak) and a JS Sea Kayak Foundation group (BCU 2 Star).

The 360° coastline of the Isle of Wight ticked all the boxes for training opportunities and accommodation – the latter at Jersey Camp in Porchfield.

Activities during the week included basic skills and rescues in Freshwater Bay, a paddle across to Lymington then back to Shalfleet, playing in the tidal race at St Catherine's Point, an open canoe day for two-star students, a night paddle in Cowes for four-star students, cave exploration, seal launching down Scatchell's Beach (a remote beach south of the Needles only accessible by boat) and a journey around the Needles with ice creams on Totland Beach.

There were also theory lessons including weather, tidal planning and navigation.

The symposium was a great success with every participant gaining the next level of award required for their development in Sea Paddling. I never missed out on developing my own knowledge and experience, especially when L/Cpl Steve Bright decided to take



a swim in a cave, which led to my first cave rescue in anger.

Additional instructors from Isle of Wight Sea Kayaking (www.iow-seakayaking.co.uk) included Owen Burson, Phil Hadley, the legendary Howard Jeffs, Tim Stuart and Kev Richardson, who all loved working with bootecks and matelets.

In the wake of the symposium, another one will be staged (date tbc), and there are also courses, expeds and symposiums delivered by the Joint Services Adventure Training Centre (www.ahrc.co.uk).

Future Sea Kayaking opportunities include an expedition to Cyprus, June 14-23, and, potentially, one to Vancouver Island in the summer of 2010 (date tbc).

Details from your nearest RN/RM canoe club or www.mka.co.uk.

Alternatively contact me at 10 Trg Bn REME: 94291 5412 (mil)/01420 485412(civ) or bosrmcsm@seme.army.mil.uk

RAF dominate 2009 on ice

THE RN Ice Hockey Association wound up 2009 with the top-level team travelling to Dundee to take on the RAF for the high-profile closing event of the year, the two-day RAF Command Championships.

The RAF-RN clash has become one of the more regular fixtures of Services ice hockey, with the teams sharing an equal number of victories in recent years.

The RAF got the better of the RN in their last two meetings, edging a 6-5 win in Cardiff in May, followed by an 8-6 triumph during their drive to claim the Inter-Services trophy at the HM Forces Championships in Sheffield in June.

Operational commitments once again weighed very heavily on the Navy squad, with over half of the regular RN representative level players being unavailable for the game.

On the opposing bench, the RAF had access to a full squad with most of their top-notch players dressed and keen to maintain their current win-streak against the Senior Service.

Despite being undermanned, the Navy did well to fend off the strong RAF offence, with L/Cpl Carl Edwards (SFSG) excelling in the RN net, turning away the majority of the 40 shots he faced.

The dark blues found it difficult to generate any sustained offensive pressure during the first two periods and would patiently wait to take advantage of the few opportunities that came their way.

The first period saw Edwards make some good early saves and the RN defence held tight against the fast RAF forwards.

The light blues eventually scored to take a 1-0 lead but the sailors and marines did not take long to respond. Mne Mark Wheeler (42 Cdo) pounced on

a loose puck in the neutral zone, slipped through the RAF defence and lifted the puck into the top corner on a breakaway to level the score at 1-1.

The second period was pretty much all RAF, with long shifts by the Navy the main reason for poor performance.

Edwards was the main reason the RN stayed in the match: his outstanding play limited the RAF to two goals and ensuring the RAF only took a 3-1 lead to the second intermission.

After some soul searching in the dressing room and a determination to keep shifts as short as possible, the RN took the game to their opponents in the third, generating some good scoring chances against the previously untested RAF keeper.

The hard work finally paid off when Mne John Hanna (RMR Scotland) managed to slip the puck into the RAF net to reduce the deficit to one goal with ten minutes remaining.

The short RN numbers came into play again in the latter part of the game. Tired legs meant the RAF managed to regain some of the momentum they had lost in the early parts of the third period.

The home team scored their fourth and final goal from the face-off in the RN zone, when a shot from the point managed to trickle through traffic to beat Edwards. Despite a final push, the Navy could not claw back the deficit and the scoreline would remain unchanged at 4-2 to the RAF when the final buzzer sounded.

RN keeper Carl Edwards was deservedly selected as the man of the match for the visiting side.

Training resumes for the team on January 12 in Gosport. Details at www.miha.org.uk.

Royals power to squash win

THE 2009 Inter-Command Squash Championships were held at the Wyvern Centre in HMS Drake.

The Royal Marines, Naval Air Command, Scotland and a combined Portsmouth/Plymouth side turned the 2009 event into a four-team competition.

No command was able to provide sufficient female players, so that competition did not run.

The event saw some of the RN's top players spread among the commands, but on paper it was Naval Air and marines who appeared to have the strongest squads.

Portsmouth/Plymouth included the President of the RNSRA, Cdre David Langbridge RN (Abbey Wood) and Lt Cdr Robin Young RN (Nelson), the Royal Marines fielded the current RN Champion, Capt Damien May RM (771 Sqn) and current Combined Services Under 25 Champion, Mne Nick Jezeph (RM Poole), NAC boasted POPT Jason Wallace, AET Stephen Wallace – current RN Under 25 Champion – and POPT Si Backhouse (Yeovilton), all RN representative players.

There was some very good squash played throughout the competition and most of the matches went according to expectations, the Royals making short work of Portsmouth/Plymouth and Scotland; both sides were also overturned by NAC.

Portsmouth easily overcame Scotland, but could not get to terms with either the Royals or NAC. As a result, it was the final match of the day, RM vs NAC that became the automatic final.

May as No.1 seed struggled initially against his young rival Stephen Wallace, but won in the fifth, and Backhouse pushed Jezeph all the way before succumbing in the fourth.

The match between Jason Wallace and RN U25 player Mne Craig Simms was the epic of the day, Simms just edging it in the fifth.

The result of 0-5 did not do justice to a very spirited NAC team, but the Royals fully deserved their Inter-Command champions status for 2009.

Cdre Langbridge, presented the Robin Bawtree trophy to the RM captain WO Stan Bloomer, and medals to the winners and runners-up.

Cup stays in RN hands

■ Continued from page 48

With one victory under their belt, the RN looked to use home advantage in the deciding match of the competition against the RAN.

The dry conditions did much to lift the spirits of the Southern Hemisphere players and from the kick-off it was clear that both teams would compete to the final whistle, with the title at stake for the RN and honour on the line for their Australian opponents.

The Brits dominated the first half through good ball handling and support play to lead by 34-0 at half time.

In the second period, a resurgent Australian team increased the intensity of their game but they squandered opportunities and the RN's defence was just too good for them.

Overall the match was a keenly-fought battle with the home side coming out on top 34-11 to retain the Babcock Commonwealth Cup.

Player of the Tournament went to RNZN No 8 Damian Gibbs and top points scorer was RN full back Mne Rob Lloyd.

The Royal Navy team acknowledged the hard, and often unseen, work of its forwards and voted their own "Men of the Matches" over the tournament as prop forward AB Robbie Roberts (HMS Bulwark) and blindside flanker Mne Kieron Morton (RM Stonehouse).

Run every mountain

FOUR mine clearance diving officers represented the Royal Navy at the Original Mountain Marathon (OMM) event in Elan Valley in central Wales.

The teams of two comprised Lt Cdr Keith Mabbott (HMS Illustrious) and Lt Cdr Tim O'Neill (Defence Diving School) competing in the 'B' Class and Lt Cdr Nick Gwatkin (HMS Collingwood) and Lt Cdr Simon Kelly (MCM1), competing in the 'C' Class.

The event is a mix of fell running, orienteering and mountain skills combined with endurance and involves teams of two battling over rough mountain terrain, over a route of between 50 and 80 kilometres (31 and 50 miles) which must be navigated without GPS and which is not known to competitors until one minute before their start time.

They carry a tent and stove with enough food for 36 hours and camp out at the overnight stop.

Mabbott and O'Neill suffered from a lack of preparation: Lusty has been at sea for Ex Joint Warrior 092 and with constant jet flying in her Strike Carrier Role the flight deck ramp wasn't available for hill training!

O'Neill came straight from staffing a notorious 'live-in week' at the Defence Diving School as well as nursing minor injuries.

As a result of that and twice becoming 'navigationally challenged' en route they literally limped home in 140th place out of 299 starters in a total time of 12 hours 39m and 46s.

Gwatkin and Kelly fared better, putting in a consistent performance to finish 58th out of 350 starters on a slightly shorter course in 9h 43s.

Home of judo for Ronda

RN JUDO athlete LLogs(SC) Ronda Crampton-Reid (HMS Manchester) was the Navy's representative in the British Services' team tour of Japan. The ten days were spread across three locations and training in five different *dojos* (traditional judo venues).

The tour, based in and around Tokyo, saw training sessions at the Kodokan *dojo* – the spiritual home of judo – and the Tokei University where the legends of Judo, Yamashita and Sato run a four-year judo degree course.

The standard of judo was exceptionally high: combining a morning training session and an evening session, the experience gained was second-to-none.

Coupled with the philosophy of 'train hard/play hard', there was opportunity to experience the culture and traditions of Japan on and off the mat. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Capt Barlow RM (CTCRM) recently completed in the British Judo Association National Championships, winning gold in the kyu grade event.

Meanwhile, RAF Cosford hosted the Inter-Services championships.

Despite some key players being unable to attend, the Royal Navy produced some outstanding results from a relatively inexperienced team (results below).

More on the sport from CPO Thacker on 01743 232541 or e-mail nr-shrewsbury-ca2@rncares.mod.uk.

Inter-Service results:

Ladies heavyweight division: bronze – LLogs Crampton-Reid; men under 60kg: gold – AB Stocker (Nottingham); silver – PO Miles (HMS Brookesby); under 66kg: bronze – Mne Orlik (42 Cdo); under 90kg: silver – CPO Clark (MCTA Portsmouth); bronze – Mne Rogerson (45 Cdo); under 100kg gold – Lt Shaw (Ramsey); silver – CPO Carson (Neptune); over 100kg: bronze – CPO Brown (Portland); LReg Beddington (Iron Duke); kyu grade lightweight: gold – CPO May (DFTF Portsmouth); silver – AB Ireson (771 NAS); bronze – Mne Orlik; kyu grade heavyweight: gold – CPO Brown, silver – AB Finlay (Ramsey); men's kyu grade team: bronze; men's kyu grade team: gold.



Air force edge first kitesurfing contest

The RNRM Kitesurfing Association battled against extreme conditions – and the best of the RAF and Army – off Anglesey.

As current holders of the RNRM/RAF kitesurfing trophy, the matelots and Royals felt the weight of expectation on their shoulders for this inaugural tri-Service clash.

Organisers gathered at the world-class venue of Rhosneigr beach to decide whether the conditions were safe enough to compete with gale force winds and head-high swell.

Having decided to continue with the competition (and despite 35 knot winds which proved too much for some), seven team members battled it out in individual heats in the freestyle discipline.

RN/RM competitors were selected the

previous month at an event in Exmouth with RN/RM seeding Lt Cdr Bob Bowman and Lt Cdr Jon Platt first and second and Capt 'Scully' Scullion at number three.

The team was bolstered by beginners LH(Sea) Carla Rich and Lt Andy Worthington, along with the more experienced Sgt Steve Mackay.

Unfortunately, Service commitments kept other top riders away which cost the team.

The heats were fiercely-contested with each rider throwing down their best tricks and providing as much variety in their ride as possible to increase their score.

With all that wind, big air was the order of the day!

Ultimately it was an exceedingly close

contest with only a single position in one heat separating first and third places (1 – RAF, 2 – Army, 3 – RN/RM).

This was the first tri-Service kitesurfing contest and showed how much the sport has progressed.

"In the first year of the RNRMKA's existence the club has run a kite camp in the Canary Islands and competed twice against the other Services," said RNRMKA chairman Lt Cdr Jon Platt.

"Our membership has already exceeded 40 and continues to grow. We hope to field an even stronger team next year to reclaim the trophy."

More details from www.kitenavy.com or Lt Cdr Bowman at bob.bowman283@mod.uk.

RNRL KO PCs



● Catch me if you can, part 3... RN skipper Danny Johnson powers away from the fuzz to score the final try in the Combined Services' victory over GB Police

a loose ball he sprinted 45 metres to touch down under the posts to make the conversion an easy one.

The police responded again and the match developed into a seesaw affair with neither side being able to exert full dominance on the game.

RAF and CS skipper for the day Chris Gordon scored another try for CS whilst two further tries for the police saw the teams separated by only two points at the break.

Despite the CS coming close to posting the first points of the second half, the police took the initiative to put themselves ahead by two points, this however was to be their last score of the match.

LPT Jonny Platt came off the bench and scored a typical hooker's try using his upper body strength to touch down under the posts.

The final two tries of the game would have graced any Super League contest.

First an inch-perfect kick was put out from the CS midfield for Logs Sili Buinimasi to leap way above the police defence and touchdown in one movement.

The final try of the match went to RN skipper Danny Johnson who gathered a loose ball in the CS half and sprinted through the broken police line, covering well over 50 metres to beat the cover and touch down under the posts; Buinimasi slotted over the conversion.

Whilst the RN back division featured on the scoreboard the CS pack was in no small way responsible for controlling a big mobile and experienced police pack.

Starting props for the match Capt Richard Sharp RM and Sgt

Jamie Goss RM led the pack in snuffing out a lot of the Police momentum giving the backs that extra bit of space, while S/Lt Atu Vuniwaqa came on at full back, defusing the police kicks and making good metres on the return.

Once again the work of RNRL has been rewarded by the sports governing body with an invitation to stage the live televised draw for the second round of the Carnegie Challenge Cup in Portsmouth in the New Year.

Whilst the details are to be finalised the event will take place in Portsmouth during the 'Dogs' on the evening of Tuesday January 26.

Further details will be posted on the RNRL website at www.pitchero.com/clubs/royalnavyrugbyleague.

Next month



Urination's what you need – the sample life of the Compulsory Drugs Test team



Things are hotting up for Ark Royal at OST



and for HMS Albion too...



A deep deep in Africa – (probably) the only submariner in the Congo



SPORT


● Catch me if you can, part 1... Cpl Gaz Evans (539 ASRM) makes a break against the All Blacks in the RN's 16-10 triumph

Picture: LA(Phot) Jenny Lodge, RNAS Culdrose



Struggle for Scott in Oz

FOR the second consecutive month the RN Triathlon Association has provided a member of the GB age group team for representative honours in Australia.

POAEM Scott Markham (MASF, RNAS Culdrose) competed in the 35-39 age group at the ITU World Long Course Triathlon in Perth.

The event consisted of a three-kilometre swim, 80-kilometre cycle ride and 20-kilometre run (that's 1.8, 50 and 12½ miles respectively for those of you who use imperial).

Coming at the end of a long season the jet lag and conditions ensured that this race – not truly a long-distance event – would be emotional from start to finish, although the newly-crowned Elite World Female Champion Jodie Swallow may disagree as she made short work of the event.

The swim took place in the murky brown waters of the Swan River and set the tone for the race ahead.

A 40kmh (25mph) headwind ensured that there was enough swell to obscure the marker buoys and make navigation 'challenging'.

On top of that, competitors swam against the current on the return leg and there was a huge number of local jellyfish who decided to enjoy the race.

A disappointing swim performance then put pressure on the bike leg, and despite the extremely windy conditions Scott moved back up the field.

Unfortunately the exertions of the swim and trying to make up time on the bike had to be paid for at some point, this was to be during the run.

This part of the course offered no shade to the competitors which was particularly unfortunate considering the 37°C temperature that the athletes had to withstand.

The run proved to be brutal, being a 'larger' runner than your average triathlete didn't help Scott in the heat and it was with welcome relief that he almost collapsed over the line.

Finishing 42nd in his category was not as good a result as Scott had hoped for but the lessons learned in this initial excursion into international standard competition will hopefully be invaluable as he looks to compete at this level on a regular basis (such as Germany this year).

More details on the sport at www.rnrmtri.co.uk/index.htm



● Catch me if you can, part 2... HMS Illustrious' POET(WE) Alexander 'Swede' Ferrier attempts to break away during the carrier's victory over the Lisbon Casuals

Picture: PO(Phot) Paul A'Barrow, HMS Illustrious

Lusty's Lisbon treat

AFTER a heavy defeat in the Navy Cup, a major change of players and a high-tempo autumn on exercises, HMS Illustrious' rugby squad returned to winning form in Portugal.

The side took advantage of the carrier's visit to the capital to take on long-established ex-pat side, the Lisbon Casuals.

The match was played in the National Stadium Sports Complex on a new generation astro turfesque/rubber pitch used by the Portuguese national squad, writes Cdr Mark Deller.

"We've never played on a pitch like this, the ball bounce is true, the feel is natural and it provides a really good all weather surface to run on – the RNRU must get one," said ET(ME) 'Boiler' Boyle.

The game was broken down into three chukkas of 20 minutes to allow for natural water breaks.

Each session was hard-fought, with some nicely-worked backs interchanges – but it was Lusty's solid defence that provided most impact.

The Lisbon Casuals – sporting some large mobile forwards and a couple of well-balanced hard-running centres – were no pushover.

They managed their game plan well, attacking in waves and utilising space at every opportunity.

Lusty's no-nonsense tackling soon took its toll and it wasn't long before Lisbon were spilling the ball in contact – quickly snapped up by Illustrious' backs to be run in for a score.

Follow-on scores were tit-for-tat, with both sets of forwards and backs fully-engaged in this high-paced game.

As the teams started the 3rd session, there was everything to play for. Lisbon were beginning to break down Lusty's defensive posture, but it was the fast pace and subtle lines of running from the likes of centres AET 'Buck' Taylor and Logs 'Nas' Rawace that sealed the deal.

Thanks to a quick ball off the top of the line-out and rapid distribution into the middle channel looking to expose the Lisbon gaps meant the carrier began to creep away on the scoresheet.

To put the icing on the cake Nas Rawace managed a solo burst to create real overlap space.

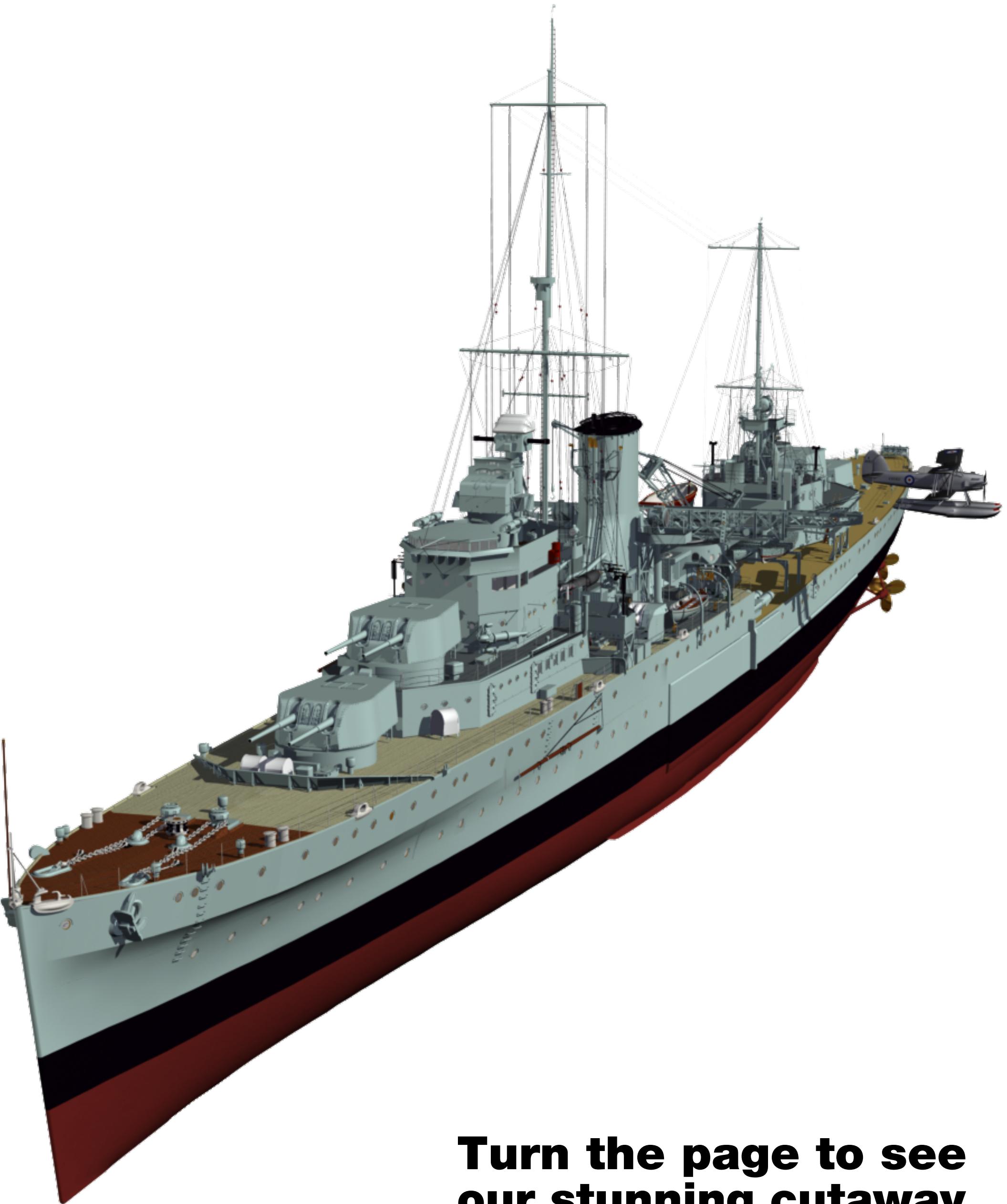
Having fed the ball out wide he continued to support the new runner to collect for a final well-worked try, sealing a 29-19 victory.

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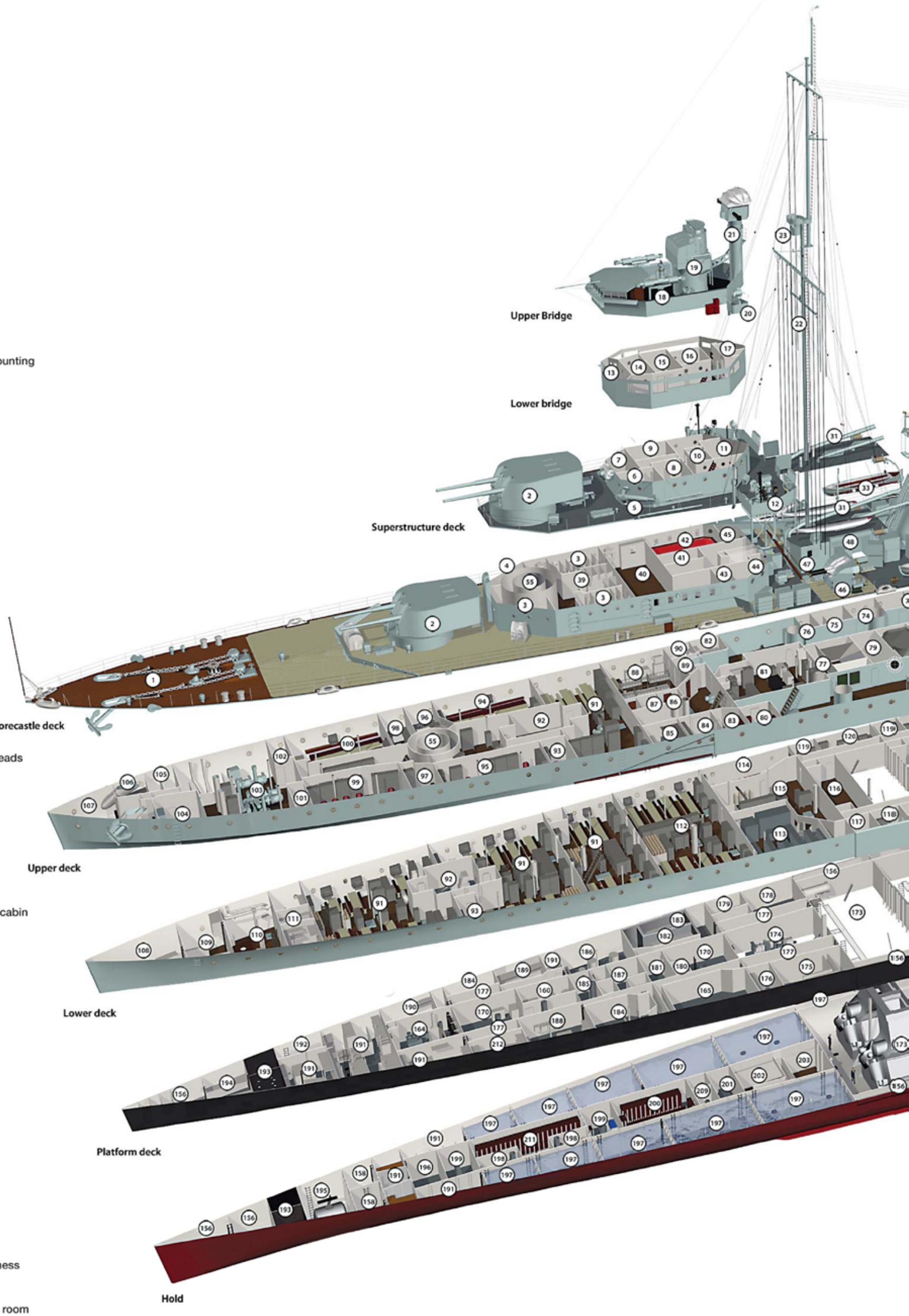
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insideHMSAJAX

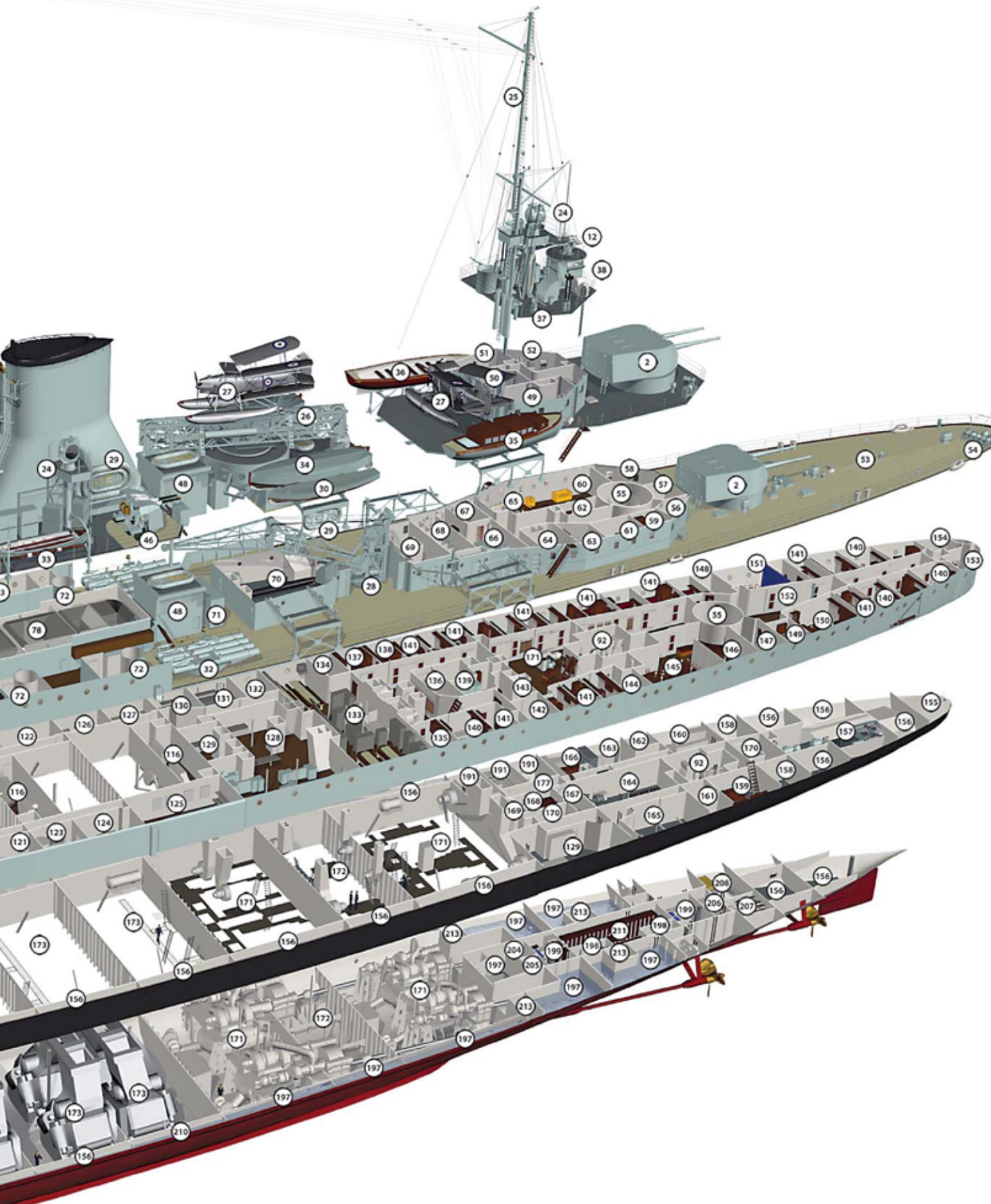


**Turn the page to see
our stunning cutaway**

1 Cable deck
 2 6in Mk XXI twin turret
 3 Seamen's heads
 4 Deck store
 5 Paravane
 6 Admiral's sea cabin
 7 Captain's sea cabin
 8 Navigating officer's cabin
 9 Armament office
 10 Signal men's ready-use store
 11 Signal distributing office
 12 Quadruple 0.5in automatic gun
 13 Wheel house
 14 Plotting office
 15 Remote control office
 16 Chart house
 17 D/F office
 18 12ft range finder
 19 6in director control tower
 20 18in searchlight
 21 4in high-angle control sight
 22 Foremast
 23 Crow's nest
 24 36in searchlight
 25 After mast
 26 Catapult
 27 Fairey Seafox spotter seaplane
 28 6.7 ton electric crane
 29 Life float
 30 30ft gig
 31 Galley flue
 32 21in quadruple torpedo tube mounting
 33 27ft whaler
 34 32ft cutter
 35 35ft barge
 36 36ft pinnace
 37 3pdr quick-firing gun
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 39 CPOs' heads
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 41 Soda fountain bar
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 43 Bookstall
 44 Seamen's cloakroom
 45 Senior rates' office
 46 4in twin Mk XIX mounting
 47 Blacksmiths' shop
 48 Boiler room air intake
 49 Wardroom officers' galley
 50 Gun room officers' galley
 51 Warrant officers' galley
 52 Admiral's and captain's galley
 53 Quarterdeck
 54 Depth charge rack
 55 Gun support
 56 Captain's bathroom
 57 Admiral's bathroom
 58 Admiral's sleeping cabin
 59 Captain's sleeping cabin
 60 Admiral's day cabin
 61 Captain's day cabin
 62 Admiral's and captain's pantry
 63 Secretary's cabin
 64 Commander's cabin
 65 Admiral's dining cabin
 66 Bakery
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 68 Officers' and warrant officers' heads
 69 Shipwright's workshop
 70 Torpedo workshop
 71 Diving gear store
 72 Ready-use store
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 76 Gymnasium store
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 79 Drying room
 80 Band instrument room
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 82 Admiral's stewards' and cooks' cabin
 83 Victualing office
 84 Provision issue room
 85 Canteen
 86 Sickbay bathroom
 87 Ablution cabinet
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 93 Canteen staff cabin
 94 POs' mess
 95 Stoker POs' mess
 96 POs' pantry
 97 Chief stokers' mess
 98 CPOs' pantry
 99 Engine room artificers' mess
 100 CPOs' mess
 101 CPOs' and POs' cloakroom
 102 Stokers' cloakroom
 103 Capstan machinery flat
 104 ELP working space
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 106 Lamp room
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 109 Canvas room
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 111 Shipwright's ready-use store
 112 Stokers' mess
 113 Main central store
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 116 Boiler room fan chamber
 117 Boys' wash place
 118 Engine room artificers' dressing room
 119 Stokers' dressing room
 120 Stokers' wash place
 121 Engine room artificers' wash place
 122 CPOs' and POs' dressing room
 123 Chief stokers' dressing room
 124 Chief stokers' wash place



insideHMS AJAX



125	Seamen's wash place
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130	Ordnance officers' workspace
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135	Admiral's office
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164	Compressor room
165	Provision room
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173	Boiler room
174	Dynamo room
175	Switchboard room
176	Engine officer's spare armature room
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178	Low power switchboard room
179	2nd W/T office
180	Telephone exchange
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186	Refrigerating machinery room
187	Auxiliary W/T office
188	Torpedo gunners' store
189	General mess store
190	Canteen store
191	Store
192	Petrol control room
193	Cable lockers
194	Painted canvas room
195	Aviation spirit compartment
196	Small arms magazine
197	Oil fuel tank
198	6in magazine handling room
199	Shell room
200	4in magazine
201	4in calculating position
202	Transmitting station
203	Low power room
204	Bomb room
205	Fireworks magazine
206	Captain's store
207	Spirit room
208	Inflammable store
209	0.5in magazine
210	Emergency reserve feed water tank
211	6in magazine
212	Torpedo officer's spare armature room
213	Gland compartment



THIS is the ship which begat a town, which begat a slew of books, which was immortalised on celluloid, which helped give the Allies their first victory of the 'Phoney War' – a victory which, Churchill proclaimed, "warmed the cockles of the British heart" in a dark, cold winter.

The deeds of HMS Ajax in the South Atlantic one Wednesday in December 1939 assured her place in the annals of Royal Navy history.

Yet both before and after the short, yet furious clash with the Admiral Graf Spee – known to history as the Battle of the River Plate – Ajax distinguished herself as a fighter of renown.

More than half the battle honours awarded the name were won by this seventh HMS Ajax during five years of global conflict.

She was the third of eight Leander-class light cruisers ordered by the Admiralty in the mid-1930s – long before the clouds of war gathered.

All eight, named for mythological figures, saw action in World War 2; three were lost.

Barely had the signal 'Total Germany' been flashed around the Fleet on Sunday, September 3, 1939, than Ajax pounced on the Olinda off the coast of Uruguay, sinking the German freighter after removing her crew (gentlemanly conduct mirrored by her future quarry, the Graf Spee).

The following day, she intercepted another German steamer, Carl Fritzen, again off the Uruguay coast. Her crew chose to scuttle the vessel rather than allow her to be captured.

Two barren months followed until December 5 when she ran into the German passenger ship Ussukuma in tandem with HMS Cumberland. Again, the crew chose self destruction rather than capture and the liner went to the bottom off Bahia Blanca, Argentina – only minutes after Ajax's boarding party had managed to get off the vessel.

The real prize was the Graf Spee, the German 'pocket battleship' which had been at sea since before war broke out and struck against Allied shipping with seeming impunity.

Nine task groups ranged the oceans searching for her. Only one found her: Force G, the South America Division of the America and West Indies Squadron, which knew these waters well. So too

did its Commanding Officer, Commodore Henry Harwood, in charge for the past three years.

Harwood made Ajax his flagship, supported by her sister Achilles and the heavy cruiser Exeter.

The German raider had already struck into the Indian Ocean, then returned to the Atlantic to attack shipping along the west coast of Africa.

Harwood and his staff plotted the positions of the sinkings and the last reported contacts with the enemy warship, described variously in garbled radio transmissions as 'RRR' – raider – 'Von Scheer' (Graf Spee's sister) and 'gunned battleship'.

Harwood reasoned the 'Admiral Scheer' would

make for the River Plate, gateway to Montevideo and Buenos Aires. The busy trade in meat and grain offered the German raider rich pickings. Instead,

the Graf Spee found Harwood and his three ships waiting for her.

The pocket battleship's captain, Kapitän zur See Hans Langsdorff, knew there were strong British forces in the region, but when he sighted Exeter and her two 'escorts' at first light on December 13, he chose to fight. It would be his downfall.

Graf Spee outgunned all three of her opponents. To compensate for this disparity, Harwood split his force: Exeter with her 8in guns would attack from one side, the smaller-gunned Ajax and Achilles from the other.

Between 6.20 and 6.23am, all three British ships opened fire – Ajax the last to do so.

The ensuing battle lasted 80 minutes, but the Graf Spee's fate was decided just 18 minutes into the clash when an 8in shell from Exeter smashed through two of the pocket battleship's decks and exploded in the fuel processing plant.

From that moment on, the German raider's life was limited to little more than 16 hours – that was as long as her fuel would last.

Exeter bore the brunt of the damage – a succession of 11in shells from Graf Spee mauled



● HMS Ajax trails her decommissioning pennant as she sails into Chatham in February 1948 and (right) a series of photographs of the Graf Spee ablaze after she scuttled herself in the River Plate in December 1939

Graf Spee images: A Hobson Collection

the heavy cruiser.

She continued the battle, but Harwood ordered Ajax and Achilles to close, attempting to cripple the raider at the same time as drawing her fire from the Exeter.

At their closest, they came within 8,000 yards of the Graf Spee, while Ajax's spotter plane buzzed overhead, reporting the fall of shot. The glow of fire from 6in shells impacting on the German warship was signalled back to the cruisers.

Reducing the range so drastically wrought havoc in the two Leanders – for seemingly little gain.

After 80 minutes of action, Ajax had fired more than three quarters of her ammunition and three turrets were out of action. Harwood broke off the battle and decided to shadow his prey rather than grapple with it during daytime. He would strike again after dark.

For the rest of December 13, Ajax and Achilles clung on to Graf Spee's coattails, remaining out of range of her main armament for the most part.

Neither would have the chance to attack the German vessel by night: she made for the River Plate. "We must head into port," Langsdorff declared. "The ship is no longer seaworthy for the North Atlantic." In the small hours of December 14, the Graf Spee arrived in Montevideo.

The outcome is well known: Langsdorff was unable to effect repairs in the Uruguayan capital; he had insufficient ammunition to fight his way out; he chose to scuttle his ship at sunset on the seventeenth.

With the night sky lit by the glow of fire, the ship's companies of Ajax and Achilles lined their respective decks and cheered each other.

HMS Ajax turned for home and spent the first half of 1940 undergoing repairs.

She returned to the Fleet that summer and was immediately dispatched to the Mediterranean, now a crucible of conflict following Italy's intervention.

In a night action off Cape Passero, Sicily, in October 1940, she sank two torpedo boats – Airore

insideHMSAJAX



Class:	Leander-class light-cruiser
Pennant number:	22
Motto:	<i>non quisquam nisi</i>
Ajax – none before Ajax	
Builder:	Vickers-Armstrong, Barrow-in-Furness
Laid down:	February 7 1933
Launched:	March 1 1934
Commissioned:	June 3 1935
Decommissioned:	February 1948
Displacement:	9,740 tons
Length:	555ft (169.1m)
Beam:	56ft (17m)
Draught:	19ft (5.8m)
Speed:	32½ knots
Complement:	up to 680
Propulsion:	4 x Parsons geared turbines; 6 x Admiralty three-drum oil-fired boilers
Four shafts generating	72,000hp
Armour:	4in (102mm) main belt; 2½in (64mm) bow and stern; 1¼in (32-51mm) deck; 1in (25mm) turrets
Armament:	8 x 6in guns, 4 x 4in guns, 12 x ½in machine-guns, 8 x 21in torpedo tubes
Aircraft:	1 x Fairey Seafox

Battle Honours

1

St Vincent	1780
St Kitts	1782
The Saints	1782
Egypt	1801
Trafalgar	1805
San Sebastian	1813
Baltic	1854-55
Jutland	1916
River Plate	1939
Mediterranean	1940-41
Matapan	1941
Greece	1941
Crete	1941
Malta Convoys	1941
Aegean	1944
Normandy	1944
South of France	1944

Facts and figures



and Ariel – and crippled the destroyer Artigliere. She fought at Matapan, the defining surface action of the war in the Mediterranean, the following spring, and was ordered to first stop the Axis invasion of Crete by sea in May 1941, then support the British withdrawal from the island a few days later.

The cruiser was part of a task force which intercepted Italian warships and small wooden boats carrying German troops. Ajax sank ten caïques – helping to ensure 300 German mountain infantrymen never reached Crete – and severely damaged the Italian destroyer Lupo.

Within a week, the roles were reversed as the Mediterranean Fleet suffered terribly at the hands of enemy air power.

Ajax had suffered a near miss on May 21. The damage she suffered at dusk on May 28 caused her to make haste for Alexandria and repairs.

Her wounds proved not to be as serious as first thought, and after supporting operations off Syria in June 1941, Ajax joined Force K in Malta over the winter.

After a refit back home in the UK through the summer of 1942, the cruiser was sent back to the

Mediterranean. Her return lasted just one day. On January 1 1943, just 24 hours after joining Force Q in Bône (today Annaba) she was hit by a 1,000lb bomb during an air raid on the Algerian port. She spent the rest of the year in the USA being refitted.

Ajax returned to the fold – and to the Mediterranean – in the spring of 1944, before being ordered to support the invasion of Fortress Europe.

Her guns smashed the German battery at Longues-sur-Mer – intended to guard the shore at nearby Arromanches, designated Gold Beach by the Allies.

Two months later Ajax's barrels flashed again, this time directed at enemy targets surrounding Yellow Beach, near Saint Raphaël, as southern France was invaded.

The cruiser remained in the Mediterranean for the remainder of the war in support of operations around the Greek Islands, pausing to host Premier Churchill and his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, in Malta at Christmas 1944.

She could be found in the George Cross island 12 months later, undergoing a refit, before returning to her old hunting ground off South America.

After a final stint with the Mediterranean Fleet,

Ajax sailed into Chatham in February 1948 to pay off.

When plans to sell her to Chile fell through, Ajax was sold to breakers in Newport, who began dismantling her in late 1949.

And so when it came to committing the ship's most famous hour to the silver screen in 1956 – *The Battle of the River Plate* – it fell to HMS Sheffield to 'play' the role of Ajax, while the great Anthony Quayle stepped into Cdr Harwood's shoes.

But some of the cruiser lives on. Her bell, still scarred by a near-miss from a bomb off Crete, had been donated to the people of Montevideo. It stands today near the customs house, while the men of 1939 are remembered with a memorial in the city's Holy Trinity Church.

And the name Ajax lives on too. The residents of a new town which had sprung up around a Defence Industries Ltd shell plant near Toronto wanted a more fitting title than 'Dilco' – or the unofficial 'Dilville' which armaments workers had given it.

They chose Ajax "to commemorate the gallantry of those who fought in HMS Ajax at that famous battle". Like Churchill, the cockles of their hearts had been warmed by the River Plate victory during

"those early, dark days of the war". It is the sole town on Earth named after a British warship.

The town's flag bears the ship's badge, the council offices feature a scale model of the cruiser the bell from the successor Ajax, the Cold War frigate, is rung before each session of the council, while most of the Canadian town's 800 streets are named for the men who fought at the River Plate.

That ever-dwindling band of survivors occasionally makes the pilgrimage to Ajax, where they are – rightly – honoured as heroes.

Some 65 veterans visited the town for the 60th anniversary of the battle in 1999. Just five were able to make the trip to Canada a decade later.

Among them was Ajax veteran C/Sgt Sam Shale RM, moved to pen the following tribute on his previous visit to the town:

God bless you all for making our wildest dreams come true
And with one voice we say special thanks from the Ajax ships crew.

Artwork © Ross Watton, PO Box 83, Llandysul, SA44 9AH, www.navalbroadsides.co.uk info@navalbroadsides.co.uk